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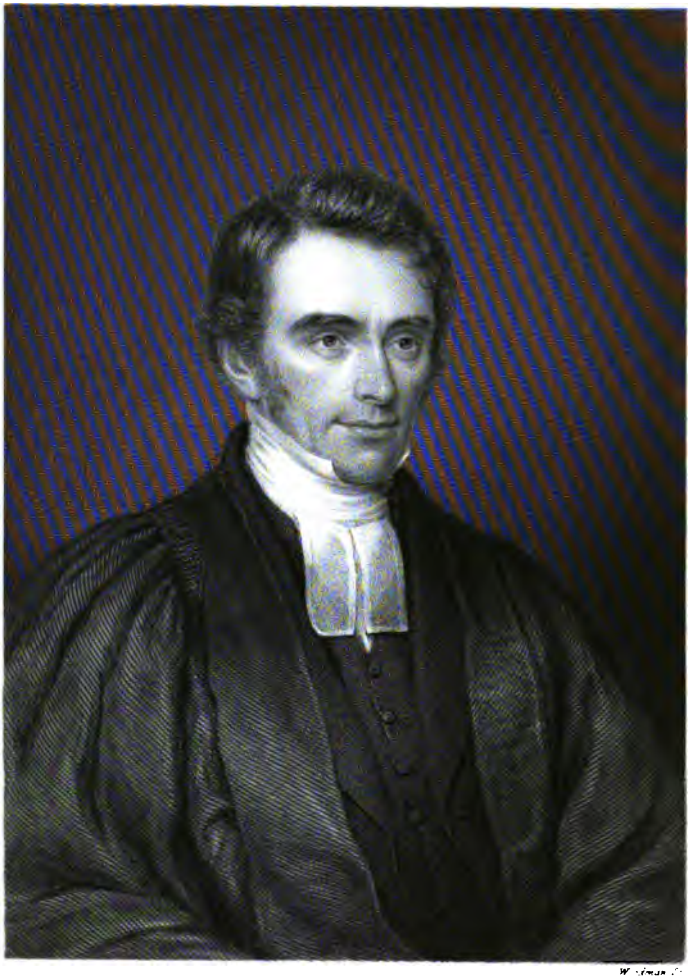

E Bickersteth

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MEMOIR

OF THE

REV. EDWARD BICKERSTETH,

LATE RECTOR OF WATTON, HERTS.

BY THE REV. T. R. BIRKS, M.A.

RECTOR OF KELSHALL, HERTS.

VOL. I.

Seeleys.

FLEET STREET, AND HANOVER STREET,

LONDON: MDCCCLI.

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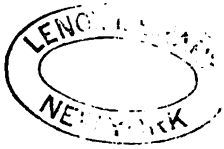

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PREFACE.

THE name of the Rev. Edward Bickersteth is too widely known, and too deeply loved and honoured, for the present Memoir to require a lengthened introduction. It has been undertaken in compliance with his request, made affectionately and solemnly in the course of his last illness. He said that the publicity to which God had called him in the sight of His church, would render it needful that some account of his life should appear; and committed it jointly to myself, and my beloved wife, his eldest child; with an earnest charge that the sinful creature should be put in its right place of humility and nothingness, and the Saviour alone be exalted. Soon afterwards he remarked, still alluding to the same subject, —"Let it be made clear, that my only ground of confidence is the Lord Jesus Christ—Christ first, Christ last, Christ all in all."

In fulfilling this sacred trust, the first volume, which contains his early life, and his labours as Secretary of the Church Missionary Society, has been prepared chiefly by his daughter, whose earliest associations were among those scenes of his busy activity, and who had a large

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experience of his parental wisdom and love, for several years before my own personal intercourse with him began. The second volume contains the last twenty years of his life, after his removal to Watton, when he was occupied with public duties of a more various nature, and took part in many of those great questions which have engaged the thoughts and labours of British Christians, from 1830 to the present day. It was my privilege, for the greater part of this time, to enjoy his affectionate confidence, either as an inmate under his roof, or as a member of his family circle; and perhaps no one had such early and full access, for several years, to his thoughts and feelings on all these successive topics of public interest. My task, as an author, has been limited to this part of the work alone. In the final revision we have been assisted by our brother, the Rev. E. H. Bickersteth, and letters or suggestions have been kindly contributed by various relatives and friends.

The short interval which has passed since Mr. Bickersteth's removal to his rest, has seemed to require, in some cases, a suppression of names, or a sacrifice of details, which might not have been needful, if the Memoir had been published after a much longer delay. It has seemed a less evil that it should have its interest slightly diminished, than to forget what is due to living characters, and to the confidence of private friendship. Yet his intercourse with all parties was so invariably in the spirit of love, that little pain would probably result, to any of his correspondents, from the fullest disclosure. In the time of publication, we have consulted rather the probable benefit to the church of Christ, than the greater symme-

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try and completeness which might perhaps have been given to the work, by delaying its appearance for several years. The times are too eventful, and life itself too uncertain, to justify our withholding any longer than was quite necessary, so bright an example of the grace of Christ, from the thousands who loved and honoured him while living, and who love and honour him still more, now that he is taken to his rest. However short this Memoir may fall of our own desires, as a full portraiture of our honoured father, we have a good hope that it contains enough to instruct, quicken, and edify many souls, by the view which it offers of the work of God's Spirit, in the heart and life of one, whose praise in the gospel is in all the churches. It is committed to the public, with the fervent prayer that his own dying wish may be fulfilled, and that it may prove, to many Christians, a new motive for diligent labour in the cause of Christ, a lamp to cheer their spirits amidst the dark valley of the shadow of death, and a beacon light to prepare them for the promised return of their Lord and Saviour.

Kelshall, May 14, 1851.

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MEMOIR OF EDWARD BICKERSTETH.

CHAPTER I.

CHILDHOOD AND EARLY YOUTH.

EDWARD BICKERSTETH was born March 19, 1786, in the little town of Kirkby Lonsdale, situated on the picturesque banks of the Lune, in Westmoreland. He was the fourth son of Henry Bickersteth, Esq., a surgeon in that town, and author of a little book entitled "Medical Hints for the use of Clergymen." His mother's maiden name was Elizabeth Batty. His eldest brother, James, went out early to sea: from the time of his last departure from home, in 1796, his sorrowing family never heard any tidings of him, and were left to fear, from the prevalence of yellow fever in the regions to which he was bound, that he must have fallen a victim to that fearful disease, alone in a foreign land. His second brother, the Rev. J. Bickersteth, began life in the Post Office, but afterwards studied at Trinity College, Cambridge; and has been, for nearly forty years, a faithful and laborious

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minister of the Church of England. Henry, the third brother, now Baron Langdale, and Master of the Rolls, was a student at Caius College, Cambridge, where he gained the highest academical honours, being senior wrangler of his year, 1808. His younger brother, Robert, has attained great eminence in the medical profession at Liverpool. He had also two sisters younger than himself. Mary Anna, the wife of the Rev. J. Cooper, Rector of Coppenhall, entered her heavenly rest only nine months before her brother, making the first breach in a family circle, which had been then for fifty years unbroken. Charlotte, the youngest of the family, married the late Rev. R. Mayor, who was for many years a missionary in Ceylon, and survives him.

Mr. Bickersteth enjoyed in early life the blessing of wise and judicious parents, of a happy, well-ordered home. His father was a man of strict integrity, and great weight of moral character; he was also remarkably cheerful, and even humorous, so that his hearty laugh has long been proverbial in the family. His mother was a woman of uncommon mental strength and energy, too firm and wise to be over-indulgent, and yet so loving that she secured the fondest affections of her children; and nothing had more effect on them than a sorrowful reproachful look from her, and the consciousness that she had been grieved. Simple dignity marked her person and manners, and indicated the inward superiority of her mind: she was known in Kirkby by the name of "Queen of the Assemblies." Her dress was scrupulously neat and lady-like, and even in old age her figure was remarkably erect. Any deviation from the strictest propriety in manners and appearance was very offensive to her; and many a dutiful

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and affectionate acknowledgment of cautions and reproofs administered by his mother, with promises of greater attention to her wishes, appear in her son Edward's earlier letters. To please her, many a trifle he would have deemed unimportant, was made a conscientious duty. At her request, he even submitted, distasteful as it was to him, to the infliction of taking dancing lessons in London, never doubting the correctness of her judgment, when she had pointed out what she thought desirable. She had the greatest dislike to hear the absent blamed, and had always some kind excuse ready for them, until at last her entering the room was sufficient to reduce evil-speaking to silence. Her incessant industry was another feature in her character: idleness seemed impossible to her; a little bag of work was always at her side, and, even at meals, if she had finished first, her hands were busy, while she joined in the general conversation. Her son frequently told his own children of her parting admonition when he left his home, "Be sure, Edward, you never eat the bread of idleness."

At this time both parents were ignorant of those deep truths of the gospel, which their own children were afterwards the means of bringing before them. His mother joined without fear the amusements of the ball-room and the card-table, and did not wish to restrain her children from the ordinary gaieties of society. Still, according to the light she had, she desired to train them in the fear of God and the way of his commandments. Her admonitions made so strong an impression on the mind of her son, that "religious parents and a religious home" are blessings several times alluded to in his journals. She laid a good foundation for the higher principle of the fear

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of God, in the deep filial reverence toward earthly parents which she inculcated. To the close of her honoured life, she was the object of fondest love and veneration to every one of her children; and her son Edward often delighted to acknowledge, how much he owed his usefulness and happiness to the influence of his mother's early training.

Of his childhood, few recollections are preserved, but his early years appear to have given little promise of what he was afterwards to become. He had much natural obstinacy to contend with; his character was considered reserved, his affections somewhat cold; a description that can hardly be realized by those who knew him only when obstinacy had been moulded into holy firmness; when the ardour of divine love glowed through his whole being; when boldness for Christ, and free-hearted affection towards his fellow-Christians, overcame every restraint of natural reserve.

He was educated at Kirkby Lonsdale Grammar School, and enjoyed every advantage which so retired a neighbourhood could afford. He often, in after-life, spoke of his father's wisdom, in resolving rather to spare no expense in his sons' education, than to increase the provision he hoped to lay up for them. His income being limited, and having a large family to provide for, it was important to him, that some of his sons should early begin to maintain themselves. Edward was but fourteen years of age, when an opening, which seemed promising, occurred in the Dead Letter Office, and his parents were induced to send him to London, to join his brother John, who had been for some time engaged in that branch of the General Post Office. His classical education was

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therefore soon cut short; the peculiar work for which the providence of God intended him required a different training. It was in the midst of the activity of London business, that the future Secretary of a great religious Society was to gain the practical habits, which fitted him to superintend its various concerns. It was amidst the many temptations, and in the mingled society of the professional office, that he was to gain that intimate knowledge of men and life, which gave such reality and practical power to his devotional writings. Habits of industry, and a genuine regard for mental improvement were early implanted at home; but his literary acquirements were chiefly gained in fragments of time, rescued by much self-denial, from the claims of an active, busy life.

Happily for him, he was not exposed alone at that early age to the dangers of a London lodging. In his brother, he found one who was both able and willing to guide him in the paths of virtue; and as it was arranged that he should board with him at the house of an intimate friend of his father's, he still enjoyed the protection of a well-regulated family.

From this period commences a series of letters to his parents, which were preserved by his affectionate mother, and form, for thirty years, almost an unbroken autobiography. The earlier of these letters indicate no special mental developement. They are more childish than would be penned by many boys of the same age. Accounts given to his parents of visits to the theatre, and of Sabbath excursions, show how different his principles then were from those which marked his later years. The letters, however, bear strong traces of filial reverence; while allusions to Dr. Garnet's Lectures at the

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Royal Institution, show that mental improvement was not entirely neglected. A paper, dated January 5, 1801, when he first left Kirkby, contains an account of the intended disposal of his quarterly salary, very characteristic of the principles instilled at home. First, the necessary expenses of board and clothing are deducted; then £1 is put aside towards defraying the expenses of a journey home, the highest pleasure to which he looked forward; 10s. laid by, because his father always taught him to live within his income; 7s. reserved for buying books; 7s. only for amusements. In another scheme, drawn up two years later, half of this last item was devoted to charity. The following extract from one of his letters contains the first allusion to a religious meeting:—

"I saw yesterday morning, at a church in Cheapside, the two Archbishops of York and Canterbury, and a great many of the Bishops; it being the anniversary of the Society for Propagating the Gospel in Foreign Countries. There was the Lord Mayor also there in his state-carriage, and the Sheriffs of London in theirs. The carriages were very magnificently adorned, and looked very fine, especially that of the Lord Mayor. The Archbishops and Bishops had their private carriages, which were very handsome also."

Some of the letters are not without interest as reflecting the public excitement in those stirring times. On the arrival of the news of peace, the following eager letter was written:—

March 29. 1802.

MY DEAREST PARENTS,

The definitive treaty is just come! Happy, happy news. It had been delayed so long that we had been afraid it would never arrive;

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and we were all desponding. You cannot conceive how different the people and every thing appear. Every person seems to rejoice, and we are going to have illuminations, and every thing that can express satisfaction; we do not know the articles yet, but no matter, peace is every thing. Mr. Moore, Adjutant Secretary to Marquis Cornwallis, brought the news, and it was stuck on the Mansion House a few minutes since. I could not forbear writing to inform you of it immediately. It has come from Paris with great expedition, as it was only signed on the 27th instant. * *

Your dutiful and affectionate son,

E. BICKERSTETH.

In 1803, when the panic excited by the expected invasion of the French, induced a general enrolment of all classes as volunteers, he fully shared the common enthusiasm, and entered on his newly-imposed military duties with the eagerness and perseverance of his natural character. The following extracts are from letters written to his parents at the time, for nothing was ever done without their advice and concurrence.

"*August* 9, 1803.—I am now elected a member of the Bloomsbury Volunteer Association, and am drilled four hours every day since Thursday, in the morning from half-past six to half-past eight, and in the evening from half-past five to half-past seven. I was proposed as soon as I got my father's letter, and I believe was just in time to get elected, as the numbers were very nearly completed. I am sorry to tell you, the expence will be much greater than I thought it would, every thing relating to the military has risen so very much, in consequence of the great demand for it. I am much obliged to my father for his kindness, in offering to pay part of the expences, which I shall be very glad to return to him as soon as I

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can afford it. I suppose I shall not be in the line, that is, a perfect soldier, for three weeks yet, I shall then only have to attend twice or three times a week, on our field-day, Thursday, on Tuesday when they fire with ball, and on Saturday morning to drill;—well, there is enough, I think, of soldiering, which engages all our time and attention. My military duties do not interfere at all hitherto with my other duties, and if the French should land, they surely cannot object to let us have the pleasure of driving them back."

"*August* 15, 1803.—I am very much obliged to you for your last, enclosing £10., which I should have been very glad to have returned as soon as I was able: it is quite as much, and indeed more than I shall want, and I beg you will not think of sending any more, as I assure you I shall not have any occasion for it, and I am quite ashamed of receiving so much. We are very busy drilling, every day four hours, which we find quite enough; however, I think it is a very great advantage; and certainly it would be a very disagreeable thing not to know the use of arms, and not to be able to fight the French, if they were to land, which every person thinks possible, and most people wish. In to-day's paper, there is an account of a gun-boat of ours being attacked by seven French ones, full of soldiers, and driving them all to seek protection under their own batteries. This will shew the French what to expect."

"P. S. Two-o'clock. The guns are firing, and, upon enquiry, I find it is because the island of Tobago is taken."

"*October* 8, 1803.—We had a very good and pleasant field-day last Thursday, and every thing went off very

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well, and you will see, perhaps, too flattering an account of it in the papers. Lord Harrington seemed much pleased. Our arms were a good deal tired with carrying the heavy musket so far; we only mustered about 700 altogether, and I suppose a great part of the remainder (nearly 500) have resigned, which I should be sorry to do just now, when the French are most expected."

"*November* 11, 1803.—I am sorry to hear such a bad account of your volunteers, they ought to be ashamed of themselves; have they got good officers? for a great deal depends on that. We have in general got very clever officers, and a most excellent Colonel and Adjutant, which is a great advantage. We were a good deal tired with going the first time to Hyde Park, but much less every other time—till now we hardly feel it. We had a wet day yesterday, but we had the credit of being the only corps that did not mind the rain; for we were to have met three others, and only a very small part of one came. We have not had any park or palace-duty yet, and shall not till the guards leave London, which will not be, I dare say, till the French have made their rash attempt."

At Easter this year, at his mother's request, Edward Bickersteth first received the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. The history of his earliest religious impressions, will be best given by some extracts from a review of life, written after his twenty-second birthday, with the purpose of humbling himself before God for the sins of his childhood and his youth.

"I have lived twenty-two years, that is near two hundred thousand hours, and twelve million minutes: for the employment of every one of these minutes I am account-

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able to God. In every minute it was my bounden duty to love God with my whole heart and strength. What a mountain of iniquities does this at once discover; for can there be said to be one minute in which I have loved God with my whole strength? But in the same minute, it is possible to transgress, many very many laws; indeed I cannot transgress one, without transgressing the whole law; if my affections are not fixed on God, they are fixed on something else. How great is the sum of mine iniquity! If thou, Lord, be extreme to mark what is done amiss, who can abide it?

"But all this is general, I will begin to take a review of my own life as early as I can recollect.

"It is melancholy to consider how much time I lost in childhood. I can yet recollect my stubbornness and obstinacy on many occasions. I was so disobedient one evening to my mother, that she told me I had made her pass a sleepless night...Yet, very early, through the pious endeavours of my mother, and the blessing of God, I had religious impressions. How much does this aggravate my subsequent sins! When I was perhaps seven or eight years old, I recollect of my own accord praying three times a day; but this I soon neglected, and the greater part of my childhood was spent in vanity, idleness, lies, and forgetfulness of God. All that my mother did was ineffectual to make me truly religious. Religious exercises were irksome; it was a trouble to repeat the catechism on Sunday evenings, to say my prayers, and to go to Church. Thus passed my time till I was confirmed, which I believe was when I was about thirteen. At that time I had some serious thoughts of the importance of religion; but I recollect being much inflated with

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my mother's praises, and thinking myself very good. About this time, I read the Cheap Repository Tracts, and I believe I derived much real information on religion from them; I recollect at least being much interested in them. I had a greater idea of the extent of the divine law; and I made some progress in reformation. I would not agree with my companions in the neglect of religion, but all was yet in my own strength, much was done from vain glory, and it was only by fits and starts that I was then in earnest.

"In January 1801, I came to London. Highly inflated with pride, I thought I was coming to be independent and happy. In a great measure, I was careless about true religion. I was, by the good providence of God, placed with a religious brother. Had I been left to myself, or been among irreligious companions, I should, in all probability, have become thoroughly worldly and abandoned. Even as it was, I can never look back on that part of my life, for about five years, without self-abhorrence, regret, and abasement. I committed sins, known sins, not only in thought and word, but in deed and action. My religious duties were cold, formal, and altogether lifeless, without meaning, done from fear, and as meritorious actions. I did not neglect private prayer, but it was short and ineffectual. My Sundays were spent in excursions and parties of pleasure. I paid no attention to the sermons which I heard, and seldom or ever read the Bible. I thought I would reform; and I thought I had but to set about it, to succeed. I therefore formed rules: this was in the middle of 1803; after having formed them, imperfect as they were, I entirely neglected them for half a year. Then I began self-ex-

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amination. At that time the great motive to my actions seems to have been the favor of man. Alas! I knew not, that if I obtained it, I might lose my soul, and be miserable for ever. I was hardly at all anxious about religion. Religion seemed entirely forgotten—a thing of indifference, about which I was careless. I had no idea of the necessity of a Saviour, or the nature of the gospel.

"At Easter 1803, I received the sacrament, and made some good resolutions, but as usual, I resolved to do far more than I did. I seemed now to have got more just ideas of the duties of religion, though none at all of the way by which I could be enabled to perform them. I read the Scriptures more carefully, and set more earnestly about my duty; but all was in vain, for it was in my own strength; and to establish my own righteousness. I thought I could be perfect by my own endeavours. I despised others, and imagined myself more earnest in religion than all my acquaintance."

The rules of conduct and the exercises in self-examination here alluded to have been preserved, and though very juvenile in their character, are deeply interesting as exhibiting the steps by which he was led first to a knowledge of his own sinfulness, and then to a higher standard of conduct, until at length the law, as a schoolmaster, led him to Christ.

"RULES OF CONDUCT, *August* 17, 1803.—(Any of these rules may be altered as my future experience may direct.)

"*Public Duty.* In office duties to be as regular as possible, and never to suffer them to accumulate; to do all that is my duty as well and as neatly as possible, and to attend particularly to any thing my superiors may advise

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or direct, and to endeavour to make myself useful and necessary to my fellow-officers.

"*Religion.* To attend divine service twice, if possible, every Sunday; and whilst in church to behave properly and religiously. To say the Lord's Prayer regularly every morning and evening. To read a chapter in the Bible every evening, and nothing but what tends to encourage religious thoughts on a Sunday; and to receive the most comfortable sacrament of our Lord, at least four times a year. Also to devote half an hour every day to religious duties.

"*Time.* The leisure hours that can be spared from necessary occupations: to allow in summer from six to eight for bathing—in winter to geometry or drawing, or to read any useful book, or to walking. From half past nine to four, to office-duties; from four to five, to Latin and Greek authors; from eight till bed-time, to any of the sciences or languages, particularly logic, natural history, experimental philosophy, chemistry, architecture, rhetoric, heraldry, botany, and the French language, and to writing a part of Porny's Exercises in French, and Clarke's Introduction to Latin.

"*Behaviour.* To do unto others as I would be done by. To endeavour to please and be agreeable as much as possible. To do every thing immediately, and with pleasure, which my brother and my other friends may request of me, which is not absolutely wrong. To conceal nothing from my brother; and to take an account of my conduct every night, which account shall likewise contain every remarkable event of my own life.

"*December* 26, 1803. Having broken through every one of these rules, and having neglected to write down

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an account of my conduct every evening, and finding it also inconvenient on many accounts, I resolve to keep an account of it once a week, on either a Saturday or a Sunday, and to endeavour to be more regular in future. I resolve also to begin this on the 1st of January, 1804.

"*January* 8, 1804. I have kept in the last week the rules I had formed, very badly, and have observed very few entirely. If I intend to be either loved or esteemed, it is absolutely requisite I should be less selfish, and more charitable and benevolent to others, and also that I should be much more attentive to the convenience of my friends. I find very few things indeed to be praised in my conduct last week, and those so overbalanced by my faults, that it would be wrong to mention them.

"*Sunday, January* 15. I am sorry not to be able to give a better account of myself than before. I seem entirely to be regardless of others, and only to consider myself; I find much to blame, and most of the rules broken, in last week.

"*Sunday, January* 22. Nothing better than the last week. I am very low in every one's love and esteem, which, at the office, I can only attribute to my childishness and moroseness, and at home, to my selfishness.

"*Sunday, January 29th.* Strange, yet equally true is it, that knowing my faults, I do not amend them, and that my conduct is equally bad on all occasions.

"*Sunday, February 5th.* I am shocked to find all my good resolutions equally broken as in the preceding weeks. I must become better: I must become more attentive to the wants of others, and more regardless of my own. I must become more attentive to my duty to God. It is death to be as I am; and I do firmly believe

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a little more exertion, a little more attention, and a great deal less childishness and folly, would extricate me from many of the difficulties under which I labour, and would make me, instead of being disliked, respected and loved.

"*Sunday, February 12th.* I have behaved somewhat better this week, though my faults are still many.

"*Sunday, March 4th.* (Lent.) Some parts of my conduct I can look at with satisfaction in the last week; but though I have been more submissive to my superiors, I have not had my great Redeemer sufficiently in my thoughts. I have committed many sins, and have much to repent of at this holy season. I have not restrained my appetite as I ought to do now; I have not been humble enough at this time.

"*Easter Sunday, April 1st.* I am better pleased with myself than I have been for some time; for I this day received the Holy Communion: still I have very much to amend, very much to repent of, and unless I watch most earnestly, pray most sincerely for God's assistance to strengthen my weak resolutions, and make his favour the only great and principal wish of my heart, and endeavour with my whole strength and unceasingly to obey him, I shall be no better than I have been. For these purposes, I resolve, from this time, by God's assistance, to pray three times a-day, to receive the sacrament, (which I find of such great use to me) not less than six times a-year, and to endeavour in every action of my life to have God in my thoughts, that evil may be far from me.

"*Sunday, April 8th.* In the beginning of last week I behaved tolerably well, and I now see how much I have fallen, how much I have to attend to, and how very cau-

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tious and watchful I must be, lest sin get a more powerful dominion over me. I must therefore pray continually, and search the Scriptures daily.

"*May* 13*th*. I am afraid I endeavour to please men more than to please God, and to do every thing for his honour; this I by no means do at present, and am therefore very ungrateful for the many mercies I receive.

"*May* 20*th*. I this day again received the holy sacrament, and am resolved, through God's assistance, to live better and more religiously than I have hitherto done.

"*May* 27*th*. I had this day another opportunity of receiving the sacrament, which I omitted for no other cause than mere laziness. I am resolved henceforth never, when I have an opportunity of communicating, to omit it, unless for very cogent reasons."

After October 7th, increasing earnestness seems to have led to more constant self-examination, and there are often daily notices of falls or victories, until after December 16, where there is a break of a year and half. Of this period, which was one of considerable worldly anxiety, he writes thus in the Review of Life, before quoted.

"The flame of religion which seemed to have been kindled, gradually died away; the seed seemed choked by the cares and pleasures of the world. I grew worldly, sensual, and selfish; and for a time I seemed entirely to forget God and every thing serious. But He remembered me when I forgot Him, and suffered me not to perish; though eternal misery would have been but a just punishment for my continual ingratitude, backsliding, and forgetfulness of His goodness."

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CHAPTER II.

ENTERING THE LEGAL PROFESSION.

A. D. 1805.

THE rising energy of Edward Bickersteth's character showed itself by the efforts he made in the years 1805 and 1806, to improve his future condition in life. His situation in the Post-office offered some present advantages; his immediate maintenance was secured; he had a home in the house of his father's friend. His duties were not laborious, and he had many hours in the day at his own disposal; but he saw no prospect of advancement. His salary was small, and was never likely to be so much raised as to secure him a competence. His work was monotonous, and afforded no scope to his mental powers. He had the charge of money-letters, which he was to re-direct to the parties by whom they had been sent, and at the end of a week he knew as much of his duties as when he left the office. After he had been there four years he wrote to his parents, submitting his difficulties to their consideration. They were surprised, for they had considered his position an eligible one, and they endeavoured to point out to him, how much he had to be thankful for. Their letter brought the following energetic yet submissive reply:

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"I can truly assure you we are not discontented with our situation; it would be very ungrateful to be insensible of the many present advantages it affords, and any change, I admit, must be a great sacrifice of convenience and comfort. What I thought was, whether it would not be worth while giving up these, could a situation be got with better prospects; and as youth is the time of exertion, whether it would not be better to change immediately, (if change was advisable,) than wait in the bare chance of something falling out. I should be very sensible that I was giving up a great deal of present comfort in any change, and wished entirely to submit it to your judgment, whether it would be advisable to seek a change or not. I hope I shall never be unthankful for the many advantages I now enjoy, and for the increase of salary, which however small, will really be very acceptable. In general I appropriate fixed parts of my salary to certain expences. I thought of five pounds a year for books, having the proposed increase of salary. This my brother thinks somewhat too much, but desired me to refer it to you. As it is almost the only amusement on which I ever spend a penny, I did not think it extravagant."

Very great difficulties now surrounded his path. The door to all the learned professions seem closed, from the expense which his entering them would involve. He was resolved to make no application for funds to Kirkby, which would induce his father to sacrifice any of his own comforts. He had also a great dread of standing in his brother's way. Thus he writes:

"*November* 10, 1805. I have already troubled you too much with my plans and letters, and shall rest very well

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satisfied with what has been done, if by this means any thing can be done for my brothers, who certainly have every claim for preference above me. It would distress me above all things to stand in the way of their advancement."

As to labour or personal sacrifice, he cared little. His time from ten till three was engaged in his Post Office duties, but he wrote September 23rd, 1805: "I would also add this; I think I can give eight hours to any situation without the least inconvenience; these eight hours might be chosen from any out of six to ten in the morning, and three to eleven in the afternoon, for I do not care how or when I have my meals." He found that his evening hours might be employed in an Attorney's office; there was much drudgery in the work, but it afforded present remuneration, and might, he hoped, enable him to gain some knowledge of the law, which would afterwards be advantageous. He therefore made an engagement in the office of Mr. Bleasdale, a solicitor, who had connections in Westmoreland, and was acquainted with his father. This gentleman soon discovered his worth, and proved a kind friend to him, discussing his prospects, and taking a real interest in his advancement. He found he had no hope of making any progress, unless he were regularly articled as an Attorney's clerk; but he still hoped, that by continuing his present laborious course, working in the morning at the Post-Office, and in the evening with Mr. Bleasdale, he should be enabled to save enough himself, to defray the expence of his Articles. His father offered his assistance, and suggested the possibility of his settling as an Attorney in his native town. To this he replied, November 18th, 1805.

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"However much I might wish to live at Kirkby, I think it would hardly ever be worth while settling there as an Attorney. I should be very sorry to put you to so much expence, on any thing less than a tolerable degree of certainty of independence, and of bettering my situation. I can hardly say how much I am obliged by the liberality of your offers; it will make me very cautious of abusing them, and as I am not so much more partial to an Attorney's profession than to any other, perhaps some plan may be found, in which this great expense may be unnecessary; for instance, I should be very glad to know how far Mr. T—— could serve me in the West Indies: if by going for a few years there, I could secure an independence, it would surely be worth while. I feel myself quite incompetent to decide on this subject, only I am sure I should with pleasure undertake any fatigue where there was a prospect of success."

His perplexities were ended in the latter part of 1806, by Mr. Bleasdale offering to receive him as an articled clerk, on terms more than usually liberal. He was to engage to remain in the office as managing clerk two years after the expiration of his term, and during the five years for which he was articled, Mr. Bleasdale promised to allow him a small salary to assist towards his maintenance, while his father undertook to defray the cost of Articles, and the remainder of his expenses.

Before this time a great change had come over the tone of his mind. His religious impressions had been revived. "I do not recollect," he writes, "what first gave me more serious impressions of religion. I think that it was Hervey's Dialogues, (Theron and Aspasio): at least, I have reason to bless God for them, as they much opened my

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mind on the nature of religion. However, whatever were the means, God, my God, was the cause, and to Him be the praise. I read much of the Scriptures, at least three or four chapters in a day. At this time I was more earnest in prayer, and more strict in religion, perhaps, (though with much ignorance) than I have been since. I enjoyed much of the comfort of religion. I had many delightful thoughts in lying down, that I might awaken in heaven, and many comfortable Sacraments." The effect of this inward change is very perceptible in the altered tone of his correspondence, as will be seen by the following letter, written August 1806, when Mr. Bleasdale was on a journey to Westmoreland.

MY DEAREST FATHER,

Mr. Bleasdale left town on Wednesday, and most likely you will have seen him before this. I had some conversation with him on my future prospects before he left town; but he seemed quite at a loss what to advise, and indeed to hint that it would not answer turning my attention to the Law at all: indeed he thought any *business or trade* would answer better, there is so great an expense of time and money required for the former, and the risk is so great; and even from what I have seen, I am very much inclined to be of his opinion. Indeed I hope that in this respect my opinions have undergone a change for the better, and that I am not so eager and mad after a change, as I was when I last year troubled you with so many letters, and I am afraid harassed you on the subject.* Still I think it a duty to use any means in my power to

* In few things was Mr. Bickersteth's tenderness of conscience more remarkably displayed than by the way in which he looked back on this period of his life. His correspondence with his parents is in no common degree submissive and dutiful; but knowing that his desire for a change had been perplexing to them, he in more than one review of life notes the year 1805, as one of sin against his parents, harassing them with impatient letters.

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advance myself; but as to the success, to be very, if not altogether, indifferent about it, trusting in a good Providence that all things happen for the best. Mr. Bleasdale mentioned several plans in the law, to all of which he allowed there were great objections. He said he should have some conversation with you on the subject, and I therefore write to you to say what I would decidedly object to, and what I believe will be the chief objections to his proposals. I would try none which did not still enable me to maintain myself without being any expense to you. Nor would I try any, which the world might not account strictly right, or indeed any to which there might be an objection of this kind. About trouble or time I should be much more indifferent, if there was a reasonable prospect of success. If we cannot find any plan that will answer at present, I shall remain well enough content where I am; only I think it will not be worth while attending Mr. Bleasdale as I have done, —at any rate not every evening.

Believe me always your very affectionate son,

E. BICKERSTETH.

On receiving Mr. Bleasdale's offer he wrote to his father: "These are very liberal terms, what I should have been unreasonable to expect; and they should not be rejected without consideration. This I have been endeavouring to give them; and I should, with entire submission to your better judgment, be glad to accept them, on these conditions; provided (which I beg you will inform me) it would not deprive you of any of your comforts, put a stop to any of your schemes, or otherwise be inconvenient to you, to supply me with the remaining money.... If you have the least objection to this, only mention it, and I can as easily give it up as accept it. Mr. Bleasdale seems to think there is little doubt of succeeding afterwards by due attention."

His father at once sent him the money to defray the

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necessary expenses of his being articled to Mr. Bleasdale; a kindness which called forth his warmest gratitude. "Many, very many thanks," he wrote, "for your handsome present of £110, which I received this morning. I trust your kindness on this occasion will be a strong additional inducement to exertion, diligence, and attention, as well as to economy. This putting you to such expense is the chief objection to this scheme."

While he thus consulted his earthly parents in every step of this change, his private journal tells how he had also committed the whole matter to God in earnest prayer. He was articled to Mr. Bleasdale in November, 1806, and left the Post-office after about six years' service. In these early struggles he was learning lessons of energy, diligence, and self-denial, and dependence on himself, most important through his future course. How much his character had been matured, and his intellectual powers developed, may be seen by comparing the reflections and resolutions recorded on entering Mr. Bleasdale's office in 1806, with the comparatively childish papers in 1803.

"*November 17th*, 1806. It being probable I shall soon change my situation in life, and have better temporal prospects (though attended with present disadvantages), which the kindness of my friends (and I thank my heavenly Father for this!) enables me to accept, it becomes prudent in me to lay down a plan and some rules for myself; by keeping which, through God's assistance, I may justify their kindness, preserve the Christian life, be useful to man, and give glory to God. These are objects that cannot be attained without labour, care, and diligence. I propose then thus to live, recollecting that

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without God I can do nothing:—In summer, from the 5th of April to the 5th of October, to rise at five every morning, and to spend one hour wholly in devotion and in reading the Bible. From six to eight I intend to study nothing but law—never beginning to read without begging God's blessing on my studies, and beseeching the Fountain of wisdom to give me knowledge. From eight to nine will be the hour for dressing and breakfast: let me recollect never to eat without giving thanks.

"From nine to three I shall be engaged in business. This will require particular watchfulness and care: let me labour, as serving God, as the appointed means of pleasing him, and of honouring my vocation by diligence, attention, and usefulness. (See further directions under the head, *Business.*) From three to five I shall be allowed time for myself, and I would employ it in this way. Let me go to my room, and employ half an hour in devotion and self-examination, and, if I have time for it, read half an hour any book that comes in my way. Another half hour take exercise, and the remaining half hour for dinner. If there is a great deal of business, I intend to give up the exercise and the reading, and return to business immediately after devotion and dinner. At eight o'clock business will be over; let me then retire to my supper, which despatch as soon as I can, that I may have time for reading. Let this be law for one hour—half an hour a devotional book, the remaining three quarters of an hour in reading the Bible and in prayer, and then retire to bed, committing myself to an approving Father and a sweet sleep.

"In winter I propose to rise at six, and only read law one hour in the morning, but an hour and a half in the

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evening. On Sundays I would devote myself wholly to devotion, and attending public ordinances, unless charity, or great necessity, and perhaps admiring the works of God in creation, prevented me.* After having done all, I shall be still, and must acknowledge myself, an unprofitable servant.

"BUSINESS.—(With respect to God, Mr. Bleasdale, and myself.)

"GOD. Strive to do all as appointed by God, as the means of pleasing Him, and showing my obedience to Him, as serving Him and not man.

"MR. BLEASDALE. I owe him great gratitude as an instrument of good to me; let me then, as part of my duty to God, endeavour in every lawful thing, to be pleasing and useful to him, to consider his interest as my own, to be attentive and diligent, studying to adorn my heavenly calling.

"MYSELF. Endeavour to keep myself unspotted from the world, to preserve spiritual-mindedness, to walk by faith, and study to approve myself in the sight of God as a zealous and faithful servant. Beware of labouring for any other end than a religious one; for in this, as in other respects, whatever is not of faith is sin."

"*November 23rd*, 1806. Yesterday I sent in my resignation at the Post-office. I copied the articles of my clerkship to Mr. Bleasdale, and sent them to my father to be signed. Better prospects are opened for me in the law, but they may fail; hard labour, greater attention, severer study, are required of me. I am more dependent; in a

* It must not from this be inferred that Mr. Bickersteth would have sympathized with the excuses now offered to palliate railway Sabbath desecration. See a Tract on the Spiritual Observance of the Lord's Day, one of his latest productions.

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worldly view, I am less certain of maintenance. I am putting my father to a great expense for articles. Mistakes are more likely to happen, and they may be of serious consequence to others. What ought these facts and considerations to suggest? The necessity of continual prayer, of watchfulness and caution, of trust in God, and reliance upon him. As I am entering on a new business, I have an opportunity of laying down a new and a better distribution of time. I ought never to let worldly changes and temporal matters make me forget that in a little time—a few years—all will be changed, and then the only thing of consequence to me will be, having employed the present time properly and religiously, as devoted to God, and serving Him —not the world, the flesh, or the devil. It is only by daily, by hourly prayer, that I can keep myself unspotted from the world—that I can preserve the life of faith in a degenerate age. Let me then recollect, I live in vain, to no purpose, or rather to the ruin of soul and body, unless it is my constant endeavour to please God in all things,—to sacrifice every thing to his will.

"I am entering a profession which is particularly exposed to temptation, and I resolve, in a better strength than my own, even that of the promised assistance, to those who seek it, of my heavenly Father,—

"1st. To trust for salvation in the alone merits of my Saviour.

"2nd. To live as devoted to God, never gratifying my own desires, when inconsistent with his revealed will.

"3rd. Therefore to observe all his ordinances, and to let no temporal inducement but charity, or great and evident necessity, induce me to neglect them.

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"4th. To be diligent in reading his word, and learning his will; in prayer and praise.

"5th. Never to do a dishonourable or dishonest thing, whether it be to gain £1000, or a penny; whether it be to please my dearest friend, my superior, my equal, my inferior, or my greatest enemy.

"6th. Not to trust in my own strength, but in God; not to expect I shall never fail, but to strive to fail as little as I can.

"7th. To endeavour to do every action because it is acceptable to God, not because it will please my master, gain me reputation, gain me the love of friends, raise my character, gratify my desires or passions, or in short, on account of any thing but the favour of God, which I will strive to look to with a single eye, as the only desirable thing.

"Let me take this time for seriously examining myself whether I am ready for that great, that last change, with respect to which the present change can no more be compared, than a candle to the sun. If I am anxious to prepare for this change, let me be still more so for that;—if I am desirous that this should be for the better, let me be infinitely more desirous to have the evidence more clear, that that infinitely more important change will bring with it a never-fading crown of glory; that then I may look forward to still brighter prospects, and at last obtain the summit of all our wishes—everlasting happiness."

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CHAPTER III.

TIME SPENT IN MR. BLEASDALE'S OFFICE.

A. D. 1807—1808.

EDWARD BICKERSTETH entered the legal profession, not, as he himself stated, from any special partiality for an attorney's life, but because it seemed the only path of advancement open to him. When, however, he was fairly engaged at his new work, the variety of subjects, the scope for mental exertion it offered, presented so delightful a contrast to the monotony of his former occupation, that he threw himself into it with his whole heart, and his letters to his parents are full of eager interest.

Bleasdale's & Co. Threadneedle Street,
March 20th, 1807.

DEAREST PARENTS,

I have just a moment's breathing-time. . . Monday, March 23rd. I had got thus far when Mr. Bleasdale came, and we went into his room together to work at this great conveyance. I suppose another week will finish it, but since we began it, except Sundays, I have hardly had a moment, even to see my brother at the Post Office, having been morning and evening with Mr. Bleasdale.

I can sincerely assure you, it gives me great pleasure to hear that

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my brother is to go into the Church. I am sure he will be a useful minister, and I think he well deserves the advantages of a College Education. He has sent in his resignation at the Post-Office.

For the last three weeks Mr. Bleasdale has been good enough to have me to dinner with him every day at Walworth, and we have worked together in the evening. Perhaps nothing could have been so improving as the business we have been upon, and I think I have learnt more of conveyancing in these three weeks than I ever knew before. Mr. B—— is also so kind as to go through Blackstone with me, after we have done our work, and assist me in taking notes. On the whole, I am much more pleased with the business of my situation, than when in the Post-Office. When I had been a week there, I knew as much of the business as when I left it. In the situation I now am in, I am gaining information every day.—If my father wanted to let any of his estates, I think I could now make one of his leases without difficulty.

Your ever affectionate Son,

E. BICKERSTETH.

Harpur Street, April 13, 1807.

DEAREST PARENTS,

The person who gave me this frank is the gentleman who has sold the large estate we have been so busy about. I think we have now pretty nearly gone through that business, and on the whole I cannot help thinking it (indeed Mr. Bleasdale tells me it is) a most fortunate thing for me. I have learnt more of conveyancing in the last month, than I might have otherwise done in five years, and Mr. Bleasdale now gives me conveyances to draw instead of himself. He told me, (don't think me vain,) that in two years, he had no doubt, I should draw as well as himself, and has expressed himself much satisfied with the exertions I have made in this business; adding, he had no doubt it would turn out to my future advantage. I am quite delighted with the study of the law; it is not dry and dull as I had imagined. I think the business is also interesting. There

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is such a variety, and so much exercise for the mind, and there is both scope and motive for exertion. In another month I hope we shall now see you. I should have been much grieved if my father had put it off, for I need not assure you with what pleasure I look forward to the meeting. That tiresome Mr. A—— has not left Hatton Court yet. On a thousand accounts I want to have a room there, and when, or whether ever, he will get out, I suppose he best knows. He has kept me in a state of uncertainty and confusion the last six months. I think I hardly hear from you so often as I ought, or rather should be glad to do. My dearest mother may be assured I shall feel the loss of my brother very sensibly: I shall be left alone to my own guidance, but I hope I shall hear often from you, and I hope there will never be any action in my life, which I shall wish to conceal from parents who have been so invariably kind to their very affectionate Son,

E. BICKERSTETH.

As he found that, on many accounts, it would be desirable to leave the friends with whom he had boarded in Harpur-Street, and have a lodging nearer his office, he wrote, asking his parent's sanction, and telling them all the minutiæ of his little plans. They gave their consent to the change, and the room to which allusion is made in the preceding letter, had been promised for his use as soon as it was vacant. He had set his heart so much upon it, that the delay proved quite a trial to his temper, and the "Review of Life, 1809" refers with contrition to the impatience which had been indulged on the subject. At length his wishes were granted, and on July 2nd, he took possession of his new abode. Procuring furniture with his limited means was a matter of no small perplexity. On one occasion he painted the walls with his own hands. He coveted a

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sofa, or at least an arm-chair; but he wisely resolved, that it would be time enough to think of these when he earned more money. A book-case he considered more necessary, and one with a cupboard underneath, which would more than hold all his books, was exulted in as a handsome piece of furniture.*

It was a solitary room in a dull London court, seeming to promise little enjoyment; yet in that room a work was to go forward, on which angels would look with deep interest. There by inward conflict, by much prayer and meditation, one of the Lord's choicest instruments was preparing for his future work, and there happiness was enjoyed so near akin to that of heaven, that the very walls of the lonely chamber became endeared. "I have enjoyed so many pleasant hours in my present rooms," he wrote some years afterwards, when he feared he might have to leave them, "that I do not look with much pleasure to a removal."

The spirit of prayer and holy resolution seems to have been afresh awakened in his mind, soon after he took possession of his new abode; for another plan of life bears date—"August 16th, 1807." It is similar to that

* Another indulgence he particularly desired was a little dog for a companion. His mother cautioned him not to keep one, as it would give trouble in the house, and be an expense to him; but a puppy was given him, which was so amusing, he could not resist the temptation. He wrote to tell her, how he had arranged just to save the penny a day his dog would cost him, by blacking his own shoes! The poor puppy met the usual fate of favorites,—was very troublesome,—was beaten,—turned out by the servant, and lost. The woman, too, was ill-tempered and impertinent to him. His little troubles are thus noted in his Journal: "Certainly a great part of this trouble arose from my disobedience to my mother, and I find other things to blame myself for. It has occupied all my thoughts, so that I have not been heavenly-minded. I triumphed when the servant was blamed, instead of being sorry for her. I did not soften matters to Mr. B.; I have been selfish, not striving to do good."

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already given, only it is more aspiring in its character; not only holiness, but eminent holiness was his aim.

"First. I will sincerely endeavour, and I also believe it to be my best interest, and a sure evidence of my salvation, and, through the merits of Christ, pleasing to God, to obtain the greatest possible height of piety, and never to stop short, or to think I have attained, till death crowns me with victory. To reach this, I must be the best Christian, the best friend, the best servant, the best master, the best housekeeper, the best son, the best brother, the best labourer, in short, I must strive to be perfect in my state of life, as my Heavenly Father is perfect. Here then is a work fitted for an immortal soul. It would indeed be vain to attempt to be this by my own strength, but here is my hope; I have a promise of a better strength, and this very night I will implore the aid, not of man, but of God, and He is able to work all this in me. . . . That I may implore this aid the more ardently, recollect, I am running the race, and the prize is immortal. I am fighting a battle: I am on a journey. I am seeking a jewel and a crown. All these are but images; my dangers and also my rewards are, and will be, infinitely greater."

The spirit of earnest aspiration which these extracts breathe, marks the whole of his private papers. He often, very often, fell short of his resolutions, with regard to early rising; the time devoted to the study of his profession, and many other duties, but his desire was, not to lower his standard to his attainments, but patiently, painfully, and laboriously, to raise his conduct to the high standard of God's word. His mind was naturally practical and methodical; and these qualities, which

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would have ensured a great measure of success in any worldly calling in which he had been engaged, were now turned to a yet holier purpose;—the working out his own salvation with fear and trembling. He knew indeed that his spiritual life must depend only on the free inbreathings of the Spirit of God, but he also knew that God works by means; that those means were as much in his own power, as those which he employed to advance himself in his worldly profession, and called for as much diligence, self-denial, and regularity in the use of them. His journal bears frequent marks of the earnestness with which he devised plans for attaining more and more of his Saviour's image.

"*Sunday, August* 3, 1806. Having hitherto kept a very imperfect account of my sins against God, man, and myself; I resolve, by God's grace, on daily examination, on the following questions:

1. Do I love God above all things?
2. Do I love my neighbour as myself, by doing him all the good in my power?

1. Am I anxious after
   1. Riches and temporal possessions?
   2. Worldly and sensual pleasures?
   3. Worldly honour or reputation?
2. Am I more anxious for
   1. The favour of God by doing all for his glory?
   2. The good of man?
   3. The salvation of my soul?"

"*November* 9, 1806. Perhaps the following rule, with God's blessing, may assist me to grow in grace. On the first day of the week, let me, after strict examination, write down every sin of the day. The next morning

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look them over, resolve, and pray against them, and then at night examine how I have avoided them, and if I have committed others, put them down. What I have avoided, put in the list of mercies; wherein I have sinned, be doubly sorry and humbled, and pray more heartily to be delivered from them; and so proceed every day in that work, writing a summary of the whole on Sunday morning. Thus let me fight against my sins, till I am more than conqueror."

He appears at this time to have had an opportunity, every week, of drawing near to the table of the Lord, and he was anxious to derive a full blessing when he partook of this holy ordinance, that it might indeed prove to be for the strengthening and refreshing of his soul.

"*December* 7, 1806. I have again renewed my vows of strict and circumspect walking. I have put another tie upon me to walk in the commands of God blameless, to have his fear always before my eyes; and if I again fall away, I shall have added another broken vow to my sins, another difficulty to returning. The world I am going into, I know, by experience, and by the word of God, is full of danger. I shall have opposition on every side, my appetites, my companions, the temptations of the evil spirit, my unsubdued lusts, the returning opportunities of gratifying them, my evil habits and propensities. How then shall I stand? The way is narrow, those who find it are few and despised. Can I bear the solicitations of every thing about me? By my own strength I cannot, but thanks be to God, he offers a greater strength than my own, even his. O how gladly do I accept it,—through Him I can do all things."

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In December of this year he drew up the following solemn form of self-dedication :—

"*December* 28, 1806. As it is advised by the excellent Doddridge, as I may hope it will have some effect on my soul in making me ashamed of sin, and as it may be an additional tie to a life of holiness ; as it will also become evidence when I am departed this world, to my surviving friends, that I trusted alone in the name of Jesus and his Gospel for life and happiness, salvation and immortality beyond the grave ; I presume to draw up the following. If one who has never seriously thought on religion should read it, may he through the grace of God make it his own act ;—for the care of the soul, so sadly (surely enough to make one weep tears of blood) neglected by the world, is indeed the one thing needful, all other things are perishing, and endure but for a moment ; but this will repay us in everlasting ages, and we labour in vain, if we make it not the chief object of our thoughts, desires, studies, words, and labours.

"Eternal and blessed God, King of Kings, Lord of Lords, who art greatly to be feared, I confess that I was conceived and born in sin. I bewail that my life has been hitherto little else but a continual course of sin and impiety, except where thy merciful goodness has prevented me. More particularly I acknowledge that I have, 'woe is me,' been guilty of the heinous sins of lying, hypocrisy, obstinacy, violations of the Sabbath, disobedience to parents, and covetousness ; living days, months, and years in these sins, and as without Thee in the world. Thus sinful, thus miserable, I prostrate myself at thy footstool, in deep humiliation, contrition, and self-abhorrence, saying, 'Be merciful to me a sinner!' 'I have

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sinned, and am not worthy to be called thy son,' 'Wash me throughly from my wickedness, and cleanse me from my sin.'

"This being my case, I gladly close with thy gracious covenant of redemption, thankfully and joyfully accepting Jesus for my Saviour, believing in Him and his gospel, and trusting in his righteousness alone for acceptance with Thee. Receive, O Lord, thy revolted servant, who earnestly desires to become one of thy people, to be included in thy covenant.

"Fear and trembling might justly take hold of me in thus addressing Thee, and I durst not so appear before Thee, were it not for thy gracious promises, and my great necessity.

"This day, then, I devote myself to Thee, I renounce every other Lord, the world, the flesh, and the devil; and sincerely renewing my baptismal vow, I consecrate to Thee all that I have and am; my body and my mind, my thoughts, possessions, time, influence, words and actions, and every means of every kind I possess, to be all used to thy glory, and in resolute obedience to Thee.

"This I am bound to do, and by thy help so I will, and I declare at this time, in this solemn season and manner, on this sacred day, after returning from thy table, my hearty and entire surrender to Thee. I humbly, yet ardently, beseech thee to accept it, to enable me to fulfil it, and to preserve me from again departing from Thee.

"I resign myself to thy direction, to be disposed of by Thee as most subservient to thy glory, saying with reverence, 'Thy will be done,' and rejoicing in thine unlimited government.

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"And may the blood of thy dear Son wash me from my wickedness, his merits plead for me, his death atone for my sins. Let me be clothed with his righteousness; sanctified by his Spirit. May I always behold Thee as my Father, live under thy influence, love Thee more and more as myself, and grow in grace, and in every good word and work.

"And when the solemn hour of death comes, when nothing worldly can afford assistance, when my years are at an end, and I must shortly appear naked before Thee, do Thou remember me, O my God. Be then, I pray thee, especially present, shining brightly around me; let my faith in thee be strong and vigorous. Oh may I then have the consolation through thy free Spirit, of having glorified Thee on earth, and finished the work thou gavest me to do; may I depart hence with such peace as will shew to others the power of thy religion, and glorify Thee, and be received into the mansions prepared for those that love Thee, there to dwell evermore with the spirits of just men made perfect, and with thee, my God, for ever and ever, through Jesus the Great Mediator of thy covenant, my Lord and my only Saviour.

"EDWARD BICKERSTETH.

How fully these closing petitions were answered, those can bear witness, who heard his dying words, "I have finished my work, I long for my rest," and who witnessed the hallowed peace that breathed around him at the moment of his departure to join the spirits of the just.

In the beginning of 1807, however, the pressure of business, and the distractions of his new calling, exercised an

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unfavourable influence on the character of his religious experience. The habit of self-examination was not given up, conscience therefore did not wholly slumber, but his hopes grew clouded, and in wandering from God he lost the joy of his salvation. The following extract shows how deep was his spiritual depression.

"*March* 22, 1807. To obtain a knowledge of the real state of my heart, let me consider my actions. It is Lent, I have hardly once exercised self-denial or kept a fast.

"With respect to my duties as a Christian to God, 1st. I love Him not, for how can I love Him of whom I never think, whose favour I never desire, whom I never strive to please. 2nd. His word I seldom, or carelessly read: it is a duty I dislike. 3rd. In adoration, I am wandering, irregular, and cold, glad when it is over.

"As a servant.—I labour not as unto the Lord, but for the praise of men: I serve not my master with fear and trembling.

"Towards others.—I am envious, hating, not striving to love or do good to others.

"Against myself.—I am proud, selfish, vain-glorious, and avaricious.

"Have I then a single mark of a regenerate man? None, except being sensible of my sins, but then I do not feel sorrow for them, as against a gracious Father and merciful Redeemer. Have I then any well-grounded hope of salvation? Not one, for I have no faith in, no love for Jesus. O my soul, throw thyself at the footstool of the mercy of God, while mercy may yet be found. Yet, oh yet, there is time, and this may be thy last warning."

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Mr. Bickersteth had fully received the doctrine of free salvation through Christ; therefore, though cast down, he was not in despair, and even in his darkest moments saw a refuge still open to receive him; but his eye was less fixed on the work the Saviour had wrought out for him, than on the evidences, often imperfect and clouded, of the work that Saviour was accomplishing in him. The aspect of truth most prominent before his mind was the heart-searching declaration that "without holiness no man can see the Lord," and he had not that full confidence in Christ's pardoning love, which enabled him, in his later years, to cast every sin at the foot of the cross, and then to press forward, undistracted by fears as to his own state, to more abundant labours in his Redeemer's cause. The following entry in his journal pourtrays some of these workings of his mind.

"*May* 17, 1807. Eternity is at stake, and I am trifling away the salvation of my soul. My soul asks the question, What shall I do to be saved? My own works utterly condemn me; and it would only be justice, were I to be everlastingly punished. This, I think, I see clearly, and I believe it will always be so; however I strive to be perfect. How then can I be justified in the sight of God? The Scriptures tell me, the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin. From ALL sin, are the words, and they are true; but is this applicable to me? Does it not apply to those only who believe? I am faithless and unbelieving. The Scriptures tell me, God is good and gracious, nay, that He sent his Son to save miserable sinners. Can this gracious Being reject those who come to Him? Let me hear his words, 'Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will

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give you rest.' What gracious words! but can they apply to those who have turned back from the ways of righteousness,—who have received his words and his sacraments without effect? There is no exception in the words, why should I make any? Let me throw myself at his footstool, imploring forgiveness for my manifold transgressions. But how, in the midst of the cares of the world, shall I preserve a life of holiness, which, let me recollect, is an essential requisite of salvation? Am I then saved by holiness? No, rather by the blood of Christ. This is an important subject, let me pursue it. The Scriptures say, 'When the wicked turneth he shall live.' 'If we confess our sins he will forgive us.' 'Believe on the Lord and thou shalt be saved.' 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for their's is the kingdom of heaven.' These are clear directions, but in sincerity I cannot perform them. There are appointed ordinances for obtaining the graces of the Gospel, but even these will not enable us to overcome all sin. Are all these requisites necessary to salvation? Assuredly they are. In the midst of these perplexities, how shall I direct myself? Let me pray. O Lord, who only art wise, great, and good, who art the Creator and Governor of all things, who by the manifestation of thy works, and of thy word, showest us that Thou delightest in mercy, and who hast promised to receive those that come unto Thee, have mercy upon me, a wandering, lost, and miserable sinner, and direct my steps into the way of salvation. Behold I now desire to return to Thee. I find by sad experience that I am not sufficient of myself to work out my own salvation. Oh, do Thou work in me. I claim thy precious promises. Lord, my faith is weak,

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yea, it is nothing, oh, strengthen and stablish it. I am without life, quicken me in thy righteousness. Thou hast promised to hear those that ask in thy Son's name; this then I am confident of obtaining, for Thou art truth, and I ask in the name and merits, and for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

Already earnestness in seeking his own salvation began to bear its natural fruits, and to make him anxious to be a blessing to those around him. These reflections occur Nov. 29, 1807.

"I wish to live in the way, which will bring most honour on religion, and do most good to others. Let me consider how this can be done, and do thou, O God, direct me. When the worldly see that religion makes a man cheerful, diligent, alive to the wants of others, and careless of his own, not censorious, but disposed to make excuses for the faults of others, and freely confessing and really sorry for his own; doing every part of duty with mildness, patience, meekness, and activity, whether our superior be absent or present; neither covetous, selfish, vain, nor proud; they will be sensible that a religion which does such things, must be true, must be powerful, must be from God, they will strive to imitate it, they will

* In his anxiety to test his own character by the word of truth, Mr. Bickersteth drew out the following list of texts:

WHAT WILL PREVENT US OBTAINING HEAVEN?

John iii. 18.	Matt. xviii. 6.	1 John iii. 4.	Mark x. 25.
John iii. 5.	Luke xiii. 3.	1 John iv. 8.	Heb, xii. 14.
Matt. v. 20.	Matt. iii. 10.	Mark x. 15.	Rev. xxi. 27.

MARKS OF SALVATION.

Matt. v. 3—10.	Rom. xiv. 17.	1 John v. 12.
Matt. v. 7.	2 Cor. v. 17.	1 John ii. 15.
John iii. 16.	John vii. 21.	

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perhaps be converted and glorify God: at any rate they cannot speak against religion as vain. On the contrary, if men see that, in spite of the religion I profess, I am gloomy and discontented, slothful, selfish, and indifferent to the wants, the desires, the troubles, and the happiness of others, glad to find and point out their faults, and impatient and irritated when my own are pointed out; proud, captious, and slothful in business, striving to show my diligence in the presence, but idle in the absence of my superiors, unwilling to take a share in fatigue, and going about it with grumbling, fond of money and self-gratification, they will perhaps impute it to my religion, and will they not say, and justly too, that my religion is vain? In such a case, I am a stumbling-block in the way of others, my religion is only hypocrisy, it gives occasion to others to blaspheme, and to continue in their sins, and will only bring greater condemnation on myself. O Father, who seest me, and knowest, far better than I do, my sins and my dangers, my infirmities and my weakness, have mercy upon me; pour down upon me the abundance of thy Spirit, that I may love Thee and seek thy glory above every thing else. Thou hast loved me far more than I can express. O enable me to live devoted to thee, with a single eye, and a single heart."

This year his letters to Kirkby assumed a more serious tone, and his parents already began to fear that religious enthusiasm would carry him too far. The following letter, dated Nov. 7, was written to remove their anxiety:

I had intended to have answered your former letter to-day or Monday, as, had I explained things a little more in my last letter, I might have prevented some trouble to my dear Father, and have

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saved myself much uneasiness; for I must say I was not a little distressed by your last, though I am much obliged to you for the advice you give. I feel indeed the want of advice, and of such real friends as my parents, and I can very readily promise to pay attention to any thing they may recommend. Openness on every subject, your kindness deserves, and my duty requires; and I can very safely assure you, that I never will conceal any thing, whether for or against me, which I think you ought, or would like to know. [Explanations are then given on several points connected with his present circumstances.] As to writing on religious subjects, I will fairly give you my real sentiments. Religion, it must be confessed, is the thing of chief importance; indeed I was going to say, perhaps truly, the only thing of importance. Now I ask, is it not natural, in writing to our dearest friends, that we should occasionally mention what is of all other things most interesting? I am sure I have felt it to be so. To be always talking of religion among strangers, or those with whom we have little acquaintance, is not, I must agree with you, the best way to do it service: yet I can see no reason why it should be excluded from letters, the only means of conveying our sentiments to dear and absent friends: if our hearts are, as they ought to be, filled with it, it will insinuate itself into every thing. To our companions a Christian life must ever be the best sermon. Our utmost efforts cannot make us better Christians than we ought to be, and all our endeavours may prove little enough to make us real Christians. Do not fear our attaching ourselves to any sect. The Church of England is in such entire conformity to the Scriptures, that while we reverence them we can never forsake it. But I will add this, that many of the ministers of our Church do not preach either the doctrines of the Church or of the Scriptures; if then by going to others of its regularly ordained ministers, (call them Methodists or any thing else) we can hear those who really do teach doctrines in entire and far more strict conformity to the Articles of the Church, I think it *a duty* to go there; and the opinion of the world, I hope, will never make us wilfully shrink from

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that, whatever may become of our temporal interest; though there need be no doubt, but that a conscientious discharge of our duty will always answer in this life: if it does not answer in making us rich, it will certainly answer in what is far better—contentment and peace of mind. I believe I have now given you all the information you desired; and I know of nothing I have concealed from you. You hardly know how much I desire your approbation, and how distressing it would be to displease you. Be assured, then, I will always study to obtain that approbation, and I know that I shall have it, if I do my duty.

His parent's answer to this letter was very cheering. "Your letter," his father wrote, "does great credit to your head and heart," while his mother added in a post-script, "My dearest Edward's very excellent letter gives me entire satisfaction, and I bless God that I have a son who thinks so justly." Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak, and notwithstanding the caution given by his parents, the tone of his correspondence became in 1808, more decidedly spiritual. The knowledge

* Mr. Bickersteth's feelings about the importance of the ministry he attended, are thus expressed in a letter to his brother, Feb. 1808: "I am unsettled about a minister.—I think it a positive duty to go where Christianity, and not mere morality is preached; for though the prayers are one great part of the service, yet a Christian discourse is so advantageous an addition, that I would not neglect the advantage, if I could have it. There are so many different opinions in religion, that it becomes a very important point to distinguish truth from falsehood, and when we have once got truth, to hold it fast; with this view I feel half inclined to shut up all my other religious books, and for a certain time read none but the Bible. There seem to me in the Church of England three classes of ministers. Those who are for a sober religion, i. e. a religion without Christianity, which the heathen discovered before us; those who partake in some measure of enthusiasm, and I fear, encourage pride in their hearers, as if they were a people set apart and all others were reprobates; and the truly Christian ministers, who make faith the foundation of holiness, but who make holiness an essential evidence of faith; who deny the least merit in holiness, and ascribe our salvation altogether to a Redeemer."

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of their sentiments, however, made him careful to introduce the subject in a way that would give least offence, and to take advantage of any occasion likely to commend serious thoughts to their conscience. In January 1808, he strove thus to improve the sudden death of one with whom he had had frequent intercourse.

My mother will be rather shocked to hear that Miss H—— died very suddenly last Monday. She had not been well for some days, but I believe, had not the least idea that she was likely to die soon. She had been walking about the house as usual, and about six o'clock in the evening, in going up stairs she was taken suddenly ill; she was carried to bed, and died in a quarter of an hour. I cannot help reproaching myself, that I have not spoken more openly and more frequently about religion to her; but when it was mentioned, she seemed averse to it. Ah! my dearest parents, when we see death laying those low in the silent grave, with whom we have been intimately acquainted, and when with the eye of faith and the light of revelation, we consider their future condition, we do not then think we have been too zealous in religion. How the mind in such cases rises above the world! How little does its opposition and contempt appear! The day of judgment and eternity then come home to our souls!

The companions with whom he was obliged daily to associate were a source of trial to him. All were regardless of religion, and some openly opposed to it, while the licentious conversation of others occasioned him deep pain. After describing his position in a letter to his parents, he adds:—

To any one but my parents, I should be sorry to send such an account as this; and there are a thousand excuses I can make for them, which I cannot make for my own failings. They had perhaps neither religious parents nor religious instruction, and have

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not been in a regular family and with such an excellent brother as I have been. In all of them I can see good qualities, which are well worthy my imitation, and the only right use to make of their faults is to avoid them. Nevertheless, I cannot but see they neglect most of the essential duties of religion, and are dangerous associates; as such, I am never more with them than I can help, and I cannot help feeling a desire, now and then, of better society. It is grievous to hear continual oaths, and not to be able to check them; and obscene language is intolerable. Were it not, however, for these, life would not be a state of probation, and a pilgrimage; and I try to be entirely contented with that situation which a gracious Providence (who knows far better than we do, what is fittest for us) has placed me in, and I cannot but know, it is far better than what I deserve. I have a thousand comforts and joys which others are in want of, and among them I highly reckon my kind parents and friends.

His disapproval of vice, and the steady rebuke administered by his example, were probably one cause of the improvement he notices in a letter to his parents, April 30th. "Having given you but poor characters of my companions before, in justice I ought to add, I think them much improved. H—— is very much improved, and seems now to have a due sense of the immense importance of religion. It is rather presumptuous in me to judge others in this way, when, considering my advantages, I must think myself much the unworthiest of them all."

While compelled to associate daily with society so uncongenial, Edward Bickersteth was preserved from its corrupting influence, for his conversation was in heaven, and the highest and most ennobling fellowship, even communion with his God and Father, was his constant privilege. His sabbaths were peculiarly precious to him. The early morning hours were spent in private devotion

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and study; he attended divine worship morning and evening; esteeming the faithful ministry he enjoyed one of the greatest of his blessings. The friends, with whom he so long resided, still wished him to join their family at a late dinner; but between this and the close of the morning service were many quiet hours, which were specially consecrated to devotional exercises. It was then that he usually wrote his Sabbath journal, in which he humbled himself for the sins of the past week, praised God for its mercies, or strove to urge upon his own spirit every motive that could lead to more exalted holiness. This journal, which was recommenced in the middle of 1806, continues almost unbroken for many years, and proved very profitable to his own soul. "From the middle of 1806," he wrote on one occasion, "I have very seldom omitted to take an account of myself every Sunday. This I have found of great advantage, and it has (through the goodness of God) been a great means of discovering to me what I believe to be the true nature of religion, and encouraging me in the performance of duty." This journal reflects, as in a faithful mirror, all the changes of his inward experience, the cloud which overshadowed him when he had walked carelessly with his God, and the joyful exultation of his spirit, when the light of His countenance shone brightly around him. Extracts only from a journal so copious can be given.

"*January* 10, 1808. I have of late been in much company, and am much less spiritual in my thoughts and desires than formerly. I form schemes of happiness from temporal pleasures; such as, having a large library, and an independent fortune, and leisure, and quietness. These are all blessings, and well in their way, but I might have

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all these, and yet be very wicked and miserable. There is little probability, from the situation of life in which I now am, that I shall ever enjoy them without sacrificing my duty in other respects, which I ought earnestly to pray I may never be tempted to do. To be anxious, (I would almost say, desirous) about these is extremely sinful, as inconsistent with that perfect resignation to, and joy in, the unlimited government of God, which is the duty of a Christian. Never let me forget that there is nothing really desirable but the favour of God and true holiness. Every thing else brings troubles, cares, and dangers. Woe is me! I never yet went into company, but I fell into sin; either by conformity to the world, by want of charity, or by a carnal mind. Never, then, let me seek society, and never let me enter into it without previous prayer.

"I have latterly much neglected the study of my profession, and wasted much time in reading other books. I will make this rule then; never on any day, except Sunday, to read any other book (but the Bible) till I have read two hours on law subjects. Let me strive as much as possible to do it as a duty to God.

"*January* 17, 1808. I cannot but be ashamed when I consider how little I keep the resolutions I form. I last week resolved to read the law, two hours each day, before I read any other book, and I have so little attended to this, that I have read the law less than ever; it would be well if this were only the case with things of expediency, but holy duties are also sadly neglected. Thus, I neglect self-examination: My prayers are cold and short, and at church I am sleepy and stupid: In business I am idle, and labour from eye-service, not as the servant of God.

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"I am afraid almost of forming another resolution, as it certainly adds to my sin if I break it, and yet if I resolve not, I act not. I know that it is my bounden duty to keep all the commands of God, whether I resolve to do it or not. But there are many things which are not strictly commands, and yet are expedient and advantageous to a Christian life. Let me then,

"Pray for direction before I make a resolution.

"Only resolve in things of importance.

"Be constant in giving God the glory, if they advance me in the Christian life.

"*January* 30, 1808. I will take a short sketch of the Christian character, and especially as it respects myself.

"A Christian is most anxious to promote holiness in himself, but while I pay attention to others, am I not forgetful of myself? A Christian is always ready to suspect himself to be in the wrong, and that others may be in the right; how ready am I to imagine evil of others and good of myself! A Christian will be rather anxious to conceal, than to display his exertions to do good; how ready am I to tell others of the good I do or intend! Am I not glad when they find it out? A Christian seeks the glory of God in every action,—do I not seek my own glory? The eye of a Christian is fixed upon Jesus his Master, as his example, his righteousness, and his hope—O wretch that I am! how carnally-minded and dead am I!

"I cannot but see the comfort and the happiness of the doctrine of faith, in the midst of these failings. I need not despair, though I have fallen into sins I abhor. I am not saved by my works. But what a motive is this to exertion, to glorify and to love God.

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"*March* 20, 1808. It is terrible to consider how continually I fall short of the divine law; when shall I be free from the burden of sin? When will my soul naturally arise to God in love and praise? Oh, it is hard work to raise a sluggish earthly heart to heaven, yea, I find it impossible to live without violating some of his laws. I am frequently wounded in the battle. Blessed be God that the Physician, the castle and the fortress are ever at hand; this conflict will not last for ever; I will then, through his grace, continue the battle. I will not faint, but I will renew my strength, I will strive day by day to grow in grace. I will seek grace while it can be found, and knock while the door will be opened.

"At present, to encourage me, I will look at the recompense, I will direct my eyes to the battlements of heaven, the mansions of immortal glory, the boundless ages of eternity, the everlasting love of the Father, the bosom of the Redeemer, and the joys of the Spirit. I will send my thoughts into the third heaven, and see what they bring back. Love, joy, peace, all perfection; no weakness, no fear, no alarms, no sin, no curse. Rivers of pleasure, boundless realms of happiness, and an eternity of joy—more than I can utter, more than my heart can conceive. When shall I be there? when shall I cast off this tenement, which keeps my soul from light, and life, and glory? In a few short years, or hours, or days, perhaps this night. Come quickly! But how, if I am not prepared? —if my salvation rested on my own merits, it would be madness and presumption to utter this. But shall the Son of God have died in vain, shall His merits not be sufficient to procure my salvation; shall his blood not cleanse my sins? Sooner will the earth, the sun, and

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moon fail; the words of the Lord endure beyond these, and on them my soul shall rest, as on a rock that will never fail.

"In the meanwhile, as long as it pleases God to continue my life here, I will strive to glorify His name, to obtain the mastery of my sins, and I will pray that I may be more than conqueror through Him that loveth us.

"*April* 3, 1808. I have again been admitted to the great Christian privilege of communion with God at his table. The Apostle calls upon us to rejoice always, and what reason have I to rejoice and be exceeding glad!

"Let me survey the extent of my riches and my possessions. I have an immortal soul; my being does not end with this short life, but endures for ever; nay, chiefly begins to exist, after this life is over. I have a reconciled Father, a gracious heavenly Father, who loves me, and will bless me for ever. I have an inheritance incorruptible, that fadeth not away. My God is with me, who can be against me? my faith and my hope are fixed and firm, and what can shake them? All earthly events work together for my good, nothing will befal without the permission and appointment of my Heavenly Father. All that my Redeemer has done is mine. I have an interest in all his actions. He has purchased these blessings; they cost Him dear, but He gives them freely; to Him I will devote my praise and my life. I shall love Him hereafter with pure unmixed love, and dwell with Him for ever. Glory to Him alone. Nothing earthly, nor all the power of Satan, can separate me from the love of Christ, for His grace is sufficient for me, and in His strength I shall stand, like a rock against which the waves beat in vain. "Why then art thou disquieted, O

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my soul, why art thou cast down?" I am on the very confines of the eternal world, and this veil of flesh which separates my soul from light, and life, and joy, and glory, will soon be taken away, and I shall enter in. Can I doubt of this? Is God unfaithful? If my hopes were placed on myself, I might well fail; but does not the blood of Christ cleanse from all sin? Can I doubt the words of Him who saith; "Whosoever believeth on me shall be saved." "I believe, help mine unbelief."

"*May* 8, 1808. *Before the Sacrament*, (after self-examination.)

"I find a heavy account against me. What have I to set against these charges. Nothing, nothing at all but the righteousness of Jesus. Nothing but what he has wrought. But what are the evidences that I trust in his righteousness? They are these, and it is the grace and spirit of God alone that has wrought them,—blessed be His name!—I think I would part with every thing, sooner than with God. I am conscious of my sins. I know I am condemned by the law, and that I am a grievous sinner, less than the least of the saints. I know that without a Redeemer I should perish. I desire to (I think I do more and more) trust in Him for salvation, justification, and holiness. I groan under the burden of sin, and my chief desire is to be holy as God is holy. I think I love the image of God wherever I see it, and desire to be useful, especially to every Christian.

"O let me rejoice in what the Spirit of my God has wrought in me! I am a sinner, but Jesus came to save sinners, and to make them holy here, and happy hereafter. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me," and still labour for an increase of holiness and good-

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ness, and in the next world the image of my God will be entirely restored to me. Happy, happy day! Glory to God alone.

"*After Sacrament.* I have fresh reasons to praise God and to trust in Him. I have new evidence that He is a God that heareth and answereth prayer. I prayed that this Sacrament might be comfortable and joyful, and it has abundantly been so. He is faithful. Praised be His name. I shall be doubly guilty, if I ever more doubt His word."

It was while he was in this happy state of mind that he wrote to his parents, "I am passing my time on the whole very pleasantly; I have a thousand blessings about me, for which I have abundant reason to be grateful. I have a thousand pleasures in which I enjoy myself, so that I almost grudge the hours in which I sleep. Every part of duty becomes a pleasure, when done from a religious motive. Even troubles have their pleasures in this view. But I enjoy myself chiefly in my books. I reflect with a kind of avaricious pleasure how many I have unread, and how much pleasure I have a prospect of here; and if that should not come, I can look with strong hope for yet greater happiness hereafter."

He was at this time not only blessed in his own soul, but made a blessing to others. This spring, at the request of one of his friends, he attended the sick—and what, at the time, appeared to be the dying—bed of a friend. He felt perplexed as to whether he ought to tell him of his danger, and remarked, in reply to some excellent advice from his brother, "I should have felt very reluctant to have done it, though I had known it to be a duty; for, bold as I may be in desire and resolution, I find a woful falling off when brought to the trial."

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The comfort he was the means of affording to his sick friend may be seen by the following letter, received from him a few months afterwards. "It is almost an old tale to speak of my illness now, but the remembrance of your kind attentions to me will ever live in my memory. I am confident that it is entirely out of my power to recompense you. But Mr. F—— has hinted to me, that I must attend some poor friendless child of want in the same manner as you attended me, as a return for his kindness in sending you to me. My principal debt is to you, who cheered my drooping spirits when I most needed it; your attentions exceeded those of a brother; they were the services of a Christian, and as a Christian shall you be recompensed—not from me, for it is out of my power, but from Him for whom you did it."*

Mr. Bickersteth's correspondence with his brother was a great help and comfort to him. They were so closely united by every bond of nature and grace, that he could unburden to him all his spiritual anxieties, and take counsel with him on all those great truths of religion so dear to both of them. The following is the reply to a very affectionate and judicious letter he had received from him, after writing to him in a tone of some despondency.

May 13, 1808.

My dearest Brother,

I am impatient to return you thanks for your kind and affectionate letter, and to send you what I trust will be a more comfortable

* This gentleman (Mr. Robert Davies) was afterwards ordained, and after serving Christ faithfully many years in the ministry, entered his rest very shortly after Mr. Bickersteth.

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one than my last. I had no right to so kind an answer, as my letter deserved a very severe rebuke; for the least fault about it was, that it betrayed a great want of faith and confidence in a gracious Father. It was written in a gloomy moment, and I am sorry I sent it, except as to that part which relates to mutual intercession, of which I trust we may both experience the benefit. We may do more good than we think in this way, for I am quite sure an humble, earnest prayer, is never made in vain, and therefore I must always esteem the intercession of others for me the greatest of all kindnesses. It may be reflected upon with gratitude, even in heaven.

I wish now, with all sincerity, to open my whole heart to you, and you will see what I think to be the Scripture foundation for perfect peace and tranquillity of mind, and increase of real holiness. May God our Father lead us into all truth, for his Son's sake! I must confess my knowledge is yet obscure; and therefore I send it to you that I may receive more information; but the more I read in Scripture, and the more I search my heart, the more of truth I think I discover in it. It requires very little self-knowledge to make a man know he is a sinner; but I confess, till I examined the motions of my heart carefully and continually, I had hardly an idea of its depravity. On watching the motives to those actions which seem good, I am astonished how full of sin they are; and if they appear bad to my imperfect knowledge and obscure eye, glad to put the best construction on them,—what must they be in the sight of the holy God? A few examples will illustrate this. I never hardly performed one duty without neglecting another. If I am anxious and earnest in religious duties, I neglect the common duties of life. If I try thankfully to enjoy the provisions and benefits provided for me, I fall into self-indulgence. A desire of the approbation of man mixes with those actions which I earnestly wish to do with a single eye to the glory of God. Hypocrisy, vile hypocrisy, insinuates itself into those actions, which I desire to perform with the greatest simplicity for the good of others. My desires and wishes themselves are weak, inconsistent, and imperfect. The

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best conclusion I make to the most apparently disinterested and charitable action, (one really so, I do not know that I ever performed) and to the most fervent prayer, or devoutest thanksgiving, is, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" God be merciful to the iniquity of my holy things! This view, connected with the strictness of God's command, "Thou shalt love the Lord with all thy heart," makes me absolutely despair of being justified by my works, and ready entirely to renounce all such hopes, either in whole or in part. And now the delightful gospel is become infinitely precious. Here I find all I want. I am a sinner, but Jesus died for sinners,—and did he die in vain?—impossible! I have broken, not only one command, but the whole law; and therefore I am doubly guilty of all; but he is the propitiation for my sins, he hath fulfilled the whole law, and paid the penalty due to my sins; his obedience and his righteousness are accepted in the place of mine; my only and whole hope is in Jesus my Redeemer. I am certain of one thing, that every sentence of the word of God is true; and I am certain that it is there written, "The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin:"—"Ask and ye shall receive." Therefore, vile though I am, and unclean, I am certain God will not refuse, if I plead the faithfulness of His word, and the efficacy of the blood of my Redeemer. It is beautifully said—"By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many." By a knowledge of this salvation, and by its application to my soul through faith, I am justified, before I have done any works whatsoever. It is true, the motives to my actions are defective and imperfect; therefore I fly gladly to the Fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, and at the foot of the cross I find peace. I am weak, but Jesus is all-powerful; I am helpless, but He is mighty to save: He is a Deliverer, not only from the guilt, but from the power of sin. I know He will deliver me, if I apply to Him, for where do I find an instance of any applying and being refused, while He was on earth? and He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. We have His own promise also, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, I *will* give you." It is

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true we are beset with dangers, but let us not lose sight of that Rock and Fortress whereunto we may continually resort. We think infidelity confined to those who disbelieve the Bible, but I fear there is too much infidelity. even in a Christian, else why despondency or gloom? Sorrow for sin may well consist with cheerfulness and joy, from reconciliation and expected deliverance. I ask myself these questions—Is not Christ the Saviour of sinners? Am not I a sinner, and desiring deliverance from the guilt and power of sin in God's appointed way? Do not I daily depend on Christ alone for wisdom, righteousness, *sanctification*, and redemption? Is not my whole hope in and upon Him? Why then, I am entitled to all these glorious blessings purchased by Jesus, and have an absolute certainty, (if the word of God is true, and if I know my own heart), "that God hath *given* me eternal life." (1 John v. 11.) I am bought with a price, even with the inestimable blood of Jesus, who "gave himself that he might redeem us from all iniquity;" and surely He is able to accomplish this. But while at times I think I can see this clearly, or at least have strong hope of it, at other times I am in the dark; but then it is my own fault, and my own want of faith. I find this faith extremely friendly to real, vital religion. We cannot but love Him who has loved us; we cannot but hate sin, which caused the death of our Saviour; and it is part of our faith, that we *expect deliverance from sin*. We know sin crucifies, as it were, our Redeemer afresh, therefore we are indeed earnest with God for holiness as well as pardon. Therefore too we groan, being burdened, with that flesh which leads us captive to sin; and while our best state here is but vanity, death is counted among the glorious privileges of a Christian. And a great privilege indeed it is;—it delivers us from sin, the only thing grievous to us—it delivers us from temptation and dangers—it brings us to Him, whom, not having seen, we love, "because He hath loved us, and given Himself for us." Were it not that we are rewarded according to our works, and that the present is the only opportunity of being instrumental in saving immortal souls, and that perfect resignation

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to the will of God is one means of shewing our love to Him, who hath redeemed us, we should most anxiously desire to depart and be with Christ; free from doubts, anxieties, and, above all, free from sin; which is far, how infinitely far better, than lingering here below in a body of sin, tossed on tumultuous waves, and, were it not for our anchor, exposed to inevitable destruction. Therefore, whilst we cry with the utmost earnestness, "Thy kingdom come!" we can yet add with contentment and resignation, "Thy will be done." These are my hopes,—I trust they are founded on Scripture,—if not, I must renounce them; for truth is the great end I am in search of, and which here I think I find;—"Thy word is truth."

Your's affectionately,

E. BICKERSTETH.

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CHAPTER IV.

REMOVAL TO NEW INN.

A. D. 1808.

A FREQUENT subject of self-reproach in Edward Bickersteth's Journal, is idleness and neglect of his master's interest. The tenderness of conscience, however, which made him thus quick to discern the first approach of sin, resulted in an outward walk so exemplary, that he grew continually in Mr. Bleasdale's esteem and confidence. "I cannot find many clerks," he said, "like Mr. E. Bickersteth; he does the work of three or four." On another occasion he remarked: "I never had a clerk who got through so much business as Mr. Bickersteth, nor one whose heart seemed so little in it." He now gave a proof of his confidence; for as changes were expected in his office at Hatton Court, he arranged that Mr. Bickersteth should remove for a time to the agency-office at New Inn, to learn common law and chancery, and then return to Hatton Court, to take at once the situation of managing clerk there. Nothing could be more favourable for his education as a lawyer, though for a time it implied much increase of labour, as the following extracts from his letters will show.

"I shall have double fagging now for some time; and if I get back to be managing clerk, there will

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be as much business in Hatton Court, in that situation, as I can do; but the advantages, at least the temporal advantages, will more than counterbalance this, and I must be content to take it like a dose of medicine, in hope of its doing good in the end. This change will entirely, I believe, prevent my going to Walworth,* or indeed anywhere, and confine me to very close business. I am to be at New Inn at nine in the morning, have two hours for dinner, and leave it at nine at night. In the remainder of my time I must read—and read very hard too—common law and chancery. You will see I shall have little time to spare to write letters or for leisure. I most fear that the only thing of real importance—a Christian temper,—may be lost in the midst of all this bustle; yet still I would look up with confidence to Him who has hitherto been gracious, and upheld my steps. I try to consider all circumstances and situations in this life as of very little consequence. They are but the way to our eternal home; and it is not of much consequence whether the road is rugged or smooth, so that it does but end there."

"I was at New Inn yesterday, and there is so much common law business, that I think I shall at any rate get thorough information on the subject. It is far from being so pleasant as in the City. The society is far worse, but that is of less consequence, as we are too busy to attend much to each other. As for leisure, I see there will be as much to do as I can get through. What a blessing it is to have such a day as Sunday, to attend to things of real importance! I think, when we get comfortable in

* Mr. Bleasdale had a residence at Walworth, which he kindly invited his young friend to consider as one of his homes.

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any situation, a change generally comes. This shows us that our life is a pilgrimage; that this is not our home; we seek a better country."

"*June 6th*, 1808. I can now give you some more information about my employment. The common law is a very hurrying, bustling business, and requires continual attention, to prevent serious omissions and mistakes. There is not so much actual fagging as I had imagined, though there is plenty of work; but we hardly ever sit still for a quarter of an hour together. I have about twenty-seven causes to take care of, and to carry through different stages. On the whole, conveyancing seems a pleasanter employment, as there is less anxiety on the mind; and I shall not be sorry, when I have learnt all that is necessary, to get back into the City office, both on account of quiet companions, and reading, for I find I can read very little even of law."

His journal expresses the same fear as his letters, with regard to the spiritual dangers attending a great pressure of business.

"*May 15th*, 1808. I am going to-morrow to remove to an office, where I shall be surrounded, I fear, with more dangers from my companions, and from the trouble and care necessary in much business. How then shall I obtain deliverance? My eyes are upon Thee, O God, and in Thy strength and care I can fully confide. O give me the spirit of wisdom and discretion, and grant that I may adorn the doctrine of God my Saviour. If it be Thy pleasure, deliver me from mistakes, errors, and carelessness. O enable me to serve Thee, whilst I labour for my master, and thine shall be the glory. Hear, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen."

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"*May* 22*nd*, 1808. In the last week I have shown a trifling spirit, very inconsistent with the company I have been in, and have heard oaths and offensive conversation without lifting up my voice against it. I read the Bible carelessly, and am not careful to maintain that holy intercourse with God by ardent prayer, morning and evening, and continual aspirations in the course of the day, which is the great means of keeping alive the spiritual mind, and destroying the carnal. My thoughts run continually on other subjects in my prayers, both at home and at church. O let me recollect that as the spirit of devotion increases or decays, so does real religion. These sins compel me to fly to the Saviour, and to rest my hope on Him alone, and it is difficult to describe the peace and consolation which this produces. Blessed be God for all his mercies."

"*May* 29*th*, 1808. I do not see that I possess those parts of the Christian temper which are absolutely essential to the Christian character. At least, I do not see that they increase. My duty requires that I should be glad to assist others, that I should be meek and lowly, bearing injuries and not resenting them, returning kindness for opposition. Now I think I can sincerely say, I do not hate any one, and that I should be glad to do good to all, even those who vex me, if an opportunity offered: yet truth obliges me to acknowledge that I am very selfish, glad to get through my own business, without caring much whether I either trouble or assist others; that I labour with eye-service, and am strangely forgetful of God. But I know that, whatever defect I discover, if I carry it to the foot of the cross I shall find relief. I know I have a High Priest who is touched with a feeling of my

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infirmities, and if I come to Him I shall obtain relief. He died for me, that He might deliver me from sin, as well as from the punishment due to sin. O blessed Jesus, Saviour of sinners, who art tender, compassionate, and full of mercy, look upon thy poor follower, groaning under the intolerable burden of sin, sensible that by his sins he is as it were crucifying Thee afresh, who hast so loved him; and desiring and entreating deliverance as the greatest blessing he can obtain."

"*June* 12*th*, 1808. Another week is gone, and I am another week nearer my expected rest. Fly on, ye hours! —nay rather, Thy will be done; for thou canst make this earth a heaven; and, blessed with thy Spirit's presence, what more can I want? O may I live to thy glory here, and live for ever with thee hereafter."

"*July* 3*rd*, 1808. I feel like a ship ready to sink: the world, its business, its cares, and its vexations press heavy upon me: my own vanity, and lightness, and pride, and carelessness, and negligence in holy duties, are so many symptoms of decay and unsoundness; the waves swell, the storm increases, and I am neglecting the means of safety. I am forgetting the Lord who is always about me, and a mighty Deliverer. My eyes would now look up to thee, O Lord. My soul hangs her whole hope on Thee. O bring me to the haven where I would be. My life is at stake, my eternal life is ready to perish, and shall I not be earnest in pleading—shall I not strive and cry without ceasing, "Save or I perish?"

"But why this want of faith—why these doubtings? Alas! can it be otherwise, while I daily sin against God my Father, and Jesus my Redeemer? O that I were delivered from my sins! This moment death would be

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welcome, did it conduct me to God my Father, and deliver me from sin. O my Father, may I rather die than continue in sin. I have indeed provoked God's wrath, and justly deserved to be forsaken by Him for ever. O horrible thought! O hell itself, to be forsaken by God, who is love itself, who is infinitely perfect, just, and holy! Yet this is my just desert. But, O Lord, in judgment remember mercy. Refresh me with the light of thy countenance, and comfort me with thy presence. And the Lord will return and be gracious. I shall yet see him, and my eyes shall behold him in glory. He hath redeemed my soul from death, and my life from destruction. Death will be the gate of life, and soon the happy door will open, and I shall enter in."

"*July* 10, 1808. I find many unpleasant things in the world; let me then delight myself more and more in the Lord, and in the hopes of that glory, to which I trust his infinite mercy is leading me. Of how little consequence is all that vexes and harasses in the world. Were I an outcast or a beggar, laughed at as an idiot, despised as a fool, treated as a hypocrite by all my companions and friends, and left to starve by the whole world, still I might, and I trust, I should be happy, in God and in Christ Jesus. I think I could gladly welcome such a situation, did it draw the cords tighter which unite me to Him, and give me a clearer manifestation of his love and of his glory. What are all the boasted pleasures and good things of this world? I have seen them all, and the word of truth, as well as experience, assures me they are vanity and vexation of spirit. I desire no more of the glory of the world; I had rather, infinitely rather depart, and be with Christ; *there* I shall not sin against Him and my soul.

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Thy kingdom come! for there thy will is, and shall be done.

"*July* 31, 1808. 'That servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes; for unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required.' This seems my case. Whatever good and pious men have known, whatever means of grace they have had, I enjoy, for I have abundance of pious and excellent books. I have the Bible continually before me, (though, alas! I read it with so little reverence and attention); I have excellent ministers; and yet, with all these advantages, I do not find that the will of God is done by me. . . . These things are against me, yet if I would take a just view of my own state, I must consider that my time is so much engaged in business,—I may say at present, nearly thirteen hours a day,—and this I think necessarily, and as a matter of duty, and that I am in the midst of companions who seem to neglect religion, but with whom I must in some measure associate. I say, let me consider these things, and I may, I think, ascribe some degree of my present coldness to them. But this is no excuse for sin. In whatever difficulty I may be, a proportionate measure of grace will be allowed, and it is entirely my own fault, if I suffer any circumstances to induce me to neglect the salvation of my soul."

One of the Sabbath occupations of this year was to write a distinct statement of the Scripture doctrines which he had received. This document proves how early he obtained clear views of those truths which his life was spent in proclaiming, and is an interesting and valuable outline of the great doctrines of the gospel.

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Scripture Principles.

"*March* 26, 1808. I think it high time to bring all my principles to the test; I will see whether they are founded in truth or not, so that they may not be wavering, but fixed and settled.

"I think it necessary to determine, that,

"1. I will embrace every thing which brings sufficient evidence of truth, however discordant it may be to my former sentiments.

"2. I will reject every thing, which on examination I find to be false, however great my prejudices in its favour may be.

"These things I take to be self-evident.

"1. That there is a Supreme Being, the Maker of all things.

"2. That I have a soul, as well as a body.

"3. That this soul is immortal.

"Truth of Scripture.—I find a book in the world, professing to be a revelation from God; it becomes then a bounden duty to enquire into the truth of this; and if I am well satisfied with the evidence, it becomes me to receive it, without further cavilling, with submission, thankfulness, and gratitude. It may contain many things above my comprehension, for how many things are there above my comprehension, of which I must admit the truth! The arguments for its truth strike me with irresistible force, and outweigh every objection. But let me see what they are:

"I find the only rational account of the creation of man, of the introduction of evil, of the nature and perfections of God, of the nature and destination of man, of

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the service which God requires of man; these are all strong presumptive evidences.

"I find this religion, though contrary to the natural desires and passions of men, overspreading the earth; I find it chiefly opposed by the wicked and profligate, and that the most estimable characters I read and know of, receive it.

"But let me examine a little closer: I find these writings contain a history of facts, intimately connected with this revelation; so that, if one is true, it seems a necessary consequence that the other must be true also. Now the truth of the history has been admitted, even by the worst enemies of this revelation; while the revelation was opposed, the facts were admitted; and there are more reasons why I should admit the truth of the history of the Jews and Christians, than any other history whatsoever; for there is a religion now in the world, founded and derived from these histories.

"Then there must have been such a people as the Jews, and the main facts of their history must be true; but if I consider the New Testament, this evidence is still stronger; for there I find one appearing, according to the prophecies of the Old Testament, whose life was so exactly foretold, that his history might be related in the very words of the prophecy, and these words of prophecy are now in the hands of his enemies.

"But, not to run into detail where I cannot doubt, I will sum up many remaining evidences. The nature of this revelation is such, as it seems impossible man could conceive. It gives the only satisfactory account of a future state of existence. The purity of its precepts.—Scripture characters.—The character of Christ.—His piety

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and labours.—Those of his apostles, what possible motive, but truth could they have for spreading this religion? The miracles recorded and never contradicted.—The harmony of books, evidently written at different times. The exceeding weakness of the objections of its opposers. The comparing it with other religions. Even its difficulties, which are analogous to those in nature. The present existence of the Jews in a state of dispersion. All these form such a chain of evidence, that it is absolutely impossible it can be false. This I also find, that the more I search into it, the more clear its truth appears; would this be the case if it were false? This too I find, the more I study to live according to it, and the more I obey it, and rely upon it, the more really happy I am; would this be the case if it were false?

"Well then, I fully admit the truth of the Bible; whatever it tells me, I believe, and will act upon, and I heartily bless the great God, that it hath pleased Him in infinite condescension to our ignorance and blindness, to send us this revelation of Himself, to be our guide, our hope, and our comfort.

"Now having received the Bible as true, the next thing is to see what it reveals, as necessary to be believed, known, and practised.

"On Man.—I see myself in a state of imperfection; my knowledge is imperfect, my practice is imperfect, for I frequently act contrary to my own convictions, and the more I examine any branch of knowledge, or any action, the more imperfect I find them. On opening the Bible, the first thing I read is, the account of the creation of this world, and of man; it is a simple and plain, yet a majestic and striking declaration, and perfectly agreeable

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to my reason. It is declared, that man was created in the image of God, that is, *perfect* according to his nature, so that he readily and naturally was obedient to the will of his Maker, and enjoyed all the happiness he was capable of. But it pleased God to place him in a state of probation, and to make his continuance in perfection depend on his obedience to one command. I believe that man had this command, on the authority of Scripture. Though the subject of it seems trifling, yet I must consider, there was no part of the moral law which Adam could transgress, he could not dishonour his parents, steal, covet, &c.

The first thing I find related, after the creation, is the disobedience of Adam, the representative of mankind. He listened to the suggestions of an evil and apostate spirit, assuming the shape of a serpent. (See 2 Cor. xi. 3; Rev. xii. 9; xx. 2.) He disbelieved the word of God, and believed the word of Satan. If I consider Adam's situation, perhaps there are as many sins in his disobedience to this one command, as it was possible for him to commit. It was an easy command, and therefore the temptation was the less. There is unbelief, ingratitude, apostacy, rebellion, pride, sensual lust, and covetousness, all contained in this one act of disobedience.

I will now consider what Scripture declares to be the consequence of this act, the next in importance to the creation of man. I find a terrible alteration taking place in the state of man. I find the ground, which brought forth fruit spontaneously, cursed, and sorrow introduced into the world as the constant companion of man;—instead of the fruits of paradise, he is to eat of the herb of the field, and the sentence of death is denounced. (Gen. iii. 17—19.

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"This curse extends to the whole race of mankind, (See 1 Cor. xv. 22, 47, 48.) and no man can with justice complain of this, for every man in his own person has violated the law, equally as Adam did. The whole race of mankind were contained in our first parents, and we, as part of them, sinned in them. What destruction and havoc did this one act of Adam cause! It ruined the temple of God. It let loose all the passions of the mind. All becomes wild disorder. The first-born of man becomes a murderer. The face of nature itself is altered, and the beasts rage against and devour each other. Since that time, what has been the state of the world? Man, formed for the glory and adoration of his Maker, has been at continual enmity, and would sooner worship a stock and a stone, than the living God. We find nothing but war and bloodshed, madness and folly.

"See here, then, O my soul, the evil nature of sin, how greatly offensive it is in the eye of the holy God—what dreadful consequences it produces, and oh, beware of indulging the least degree of that, which brought so much desolation and misery on the earth.

"THE CORRUPTION OF MAN. This subject deserves more full consideration, and I will endeavour to mark what the Scriptures say of man since the fall. I find the words of Scripture very strong, in stating the corruption of man. (See Rom. iii. 10; Psalm liii. 3; Eccles. vii. 20; Isa. lxiv. 6, 7; Psalm li. 5.) It is said, 'There is not one righteous, not a just man that liveth and sinneth not.' 'The thoughts of his heart are said to be only evil continually.' Our articles seem truly to say;—'Man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth *always* contrary to the Spirit.'

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"Now all sin is necessarily an abomination in the sight of God. (Prov. viii. 7; xv. 26.) If a parent were to bid his child to do one thing, and he was continually doing other things, which he was forbidden to do, would not the parent justly and naturally be angry with his child? This is our case; we are not only disobedient once or twice, but 'in *many* things we all offend.'

"Let me apply this to myself, for I myself daily see and feel the power of this corruption. Did I not partake of this general depravity, every thought would naturally rise to God, every action would be to the glory of my Maker; it would be my greatest delight to obey the will of God, and my highest pleasure would be in approaching to Him in prayer and in praise. I should have an undivided and supreme love to God, and all temporal things would be entirely indifferent: but I find, sadly, that the reverse of this is true. It is difficult to raise my thoughts to heaven, and to God, and they soon drop. When I consider what is required to constitute a holy action, I must confess I never did one in my whole life. I never performed an action, which, even to my obscure mind, did not appear defective;—how much more to the holy eye of God;—so, that were my salvation to depend on only one action, and that the most holy of my life, I must be condemned, and God justified. My repentance needs to be repented of, my prayers require forgiveness, my tears are never equal to my guilt, nor my cries to my necessity. Mercy is all I can ask for, and were it not infinite mercy, eternal misery would be my just desert.

"I must esteem then a revelation, propounding a deliverance from this state, and a pardon of this guilt, as invaluable. Such a revelation I find in the blessed Bible, and I heartily thank God for His excellent gift

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"*April* 23, 1808. ON THE REDEMPTION OF MAN. On opening the New Testament (a declaration of the dispensation, under which we now live,) I read an account of the birth of the author of our religion. A Virgin, by the miraculous interposition of God (the Maker of the world surely has a right to do what He will with His own, whatever the profane scoffer may say,) conceives and bears a son, called Jesus Christ, that is, the Anointed Saviour. It is immediately said, he is so called, because 'he shall save his people from their sins.' (Matt. i. 21.) Here, then, I find all I want. Carnal reason may ask,—How is it possible? but as I have clear evidence that the Bible is a revelation from God, I am sure that by this Jesus I may be saved from my sins. It has pleased God to reveal, not only that by Him we may be saved, but also the whole history of this unspeakable mercy and benefit, and how we may become interested in it.

"We are by nature 'sold under sin' (Rom. vii. 14.) Here is the ransom. (Matt. xx. 28; 1 Tim. ii. 6.) In him we have redemption. (Ephes. i. 7; Col. i. 14; Rom. iii. 24.) We are under a curse, and by Him we are redeemed from that curse, so that all the privileges of the first Adam, which were forfeited by him, are here restored to us.

"'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me,' for the bright prospect here opening upon thee. Only think—redemption from slavery, deliverance from bondage, and all, the free gift of God, without the least thing done by man to merit it. Oh, unspeakable love!

"This is a subject I can never be tired of; this is worthy of all my thoughts, and I will endeavour, with the divine blessing, to gain a clear and accurate knowledge

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of every part of this divine wisdom. Blessed be God, it is so plain, that none can mistake.

"THE PERSON OF THE REDEEMER. As unassisted reason never could have discovered a Saviour, so it must be entirely ignorant of his character and perfections. I will not enquire what reason suggests, but what the Bible reveals; and I can easily perceive the difference between a matter being *above*, and a matter being *contrary to* reason. God may have revealed things I cannot comprehend, for how can a finite being comprehend an infinite being? But why should He reveal them? Perhaps as a trial of faith. There is sufficient light to leave all without excuse, who disbelieve Revelation; and there is sufficient obscurity in many matters, to humble us, and to be a stumbling-block to those who obstinately disbelieve and dislike religion. What God requires, as a matter of faith, cannot be tried by reason, only it must not be contrary to reason.

"Our Redeemer is called Emmanuel, or GOD WITH US. (Matt. i. 23.) It is said, 'the Word was God.' (John i. 1.) We are to be baptised 'in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.' (Matt. xxviii. 19.) Can we conceive that any created being would be thus equalled with God? See also 2 Cor. xiii. 14.; where our Saviour is named before the Father. I find it expressly said, that He thought it no robbery to be (that is, He really and essentially is) equal with God. (Phil. ii. 6—8. See also Heb. i. 1—3.; Isa. ix. 6.) Now one text should be sufficient to convince me of the truth of any doctrine; but here I find such abundance (I have but mentioned very few of them indeed) that I can no more disbelieve that Jesus Christ is God, equal with the Father, than I can disbelieve the Bible.

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"But are there then two Gods? No; for the same Bible tells me there is but one. What is the union between the Father, the Son, and the Spirit? I cannot tell, for God has not revealed it. I find the attributes of God, infinity, omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence, attributed to all, and yet I find each described as doing distinct acts. I thankfully accept this revelation as a matter of faith; it is not contrary to my reason, for it is not asserted that God is three and one in the same respect. Having silenced what the pride of my reason might be apt to say against this mystery, I turn, with infinite pleasure and gratitude, to adore the Author of my being, for His wonderful love manifested in the Redeemer. Had it been an angel, or any created being, I might reasonably have doubted the sufficiency of my salvation;—but it was the Lord of the whole world who took our nature upon Him, that He might redeem us. O the wisdom, the goodness, and the depth of the love of God! Blessed be His name for ever and ever!

"*April* 30, 1808. OF THE ATONEMENT. 'The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.' (Isa. liii. 6.) 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world.' (John i. 29. See Dan. ix. 26.; Isa. liii. 5.; 2 Cor. v. 21.; Ephes. v. 2.; 1 Pet. i. 18—21. Rev. i. 5, 6.; Rev. v. 12.) It is so clearly laid down here, that Jesus has obtained pardon for us, by the sacrifice of himself, and that by his death we may be delivered from the curse of the law, that I cannot doubt it, and a most comfortable doctrine it is.

"From the earliest ages, men have endeavoured to be reconciled to God by sacrifices. We see this throughout the heathen world: whether they derived it from Adam,

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or the Jews, is of little consequence; the universal practice shews how needful men thought an atonement to be, and implies that there is no absurdity in the supposition of one suffering for the sins of another. Every part of the Jewish sacrifices was symbolical; they were not unmeaning, like the sacrifices of the heathens, but had reference to our Saviour, in whom they were all fulfilled. The Jews had the gospel preached to them, as well as the Christians, for the sacrifices of the law were an obscure figure of what is revealed to us. The Jews clearly had this advantage over the heathens, they were certain their religion came from God; they knew that their sins would not be imputed to them, if they had faith in God.

"This is an astonishing doctrine; it is above man's invention—almost above his comprehension. The sins of the whole world laid on one man! Who, less than God himself, could have borne the weight? Who, but God himself, could have any merit or any efficacy to take away sin? It is absurd to suppose that a created being can have merit; for whatever his actions may be, he must be unprofitable to the great Creator, who needs none of them: much less could he make an atonement for the sins of others.

"But why should I take the lesser light of reason, when I have the greater light of revelation, from which it is evident that there is a propitiation provided for the sins of the whole world, and that, if we will use the appointed means, we may be interested in all that this gracious Benefactor has done for us.

"Bless the Lord, O my soul! I may in deed and with great truth now cry, With my whole heart I will sing thy praise! Every thought, word, and deed, through thy

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grace, shall be devoted to thy service, and in resolute obedience to Thee.

"*May 8th*, 1808. JUSTIFICATION.—It is the most important inquiry in the world, How can a man be justified with God? (Job ix. 2.) How at the bar of heaven shall I be acquitted of all my sins? and how in this world can I obtain any tolerable satisfaction, that this will be my case? Though I have in some degree before obviated the necessity of this question, yet its awful importance deserves particular inquiry.

"There are only two ways by which a man can be acquitted of a crime with which he is charged; one is innocence—that he never committed it; and the other is pardon—that it is freely forgiven him. The first it is impossible I can plead, for I have already proved myself guilty; and so far from not having broken the commands of God, I have reason to cry every night for pardon and for mercy. Therefore the other way is the only way left for me.

"On looking into the Scripture, I find no doctrine more clearly expressed or revealed than this: 'Through this man is preached forgiveness of sins, and by him all that believe are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses." (Acts xiii.) We are justified by faith through Jesus. (Rom. v. 1.) We are justified by his blood. (Rom. v. 9.) It must be such a faith as brings forth works. (James ii.) 'Being justified by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.' (Rom. iii. 24.)

"The persons who are justified must be sinners, for those who are righteous need no justification. The means or instrument through which they receive justification is

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faith. It is God who justifieth; it is by His mere grace that we are justified, without the least merit or deserving of our own. The reason of this justification is the redemption wrought by Christ: the effect of it is the remission of sins: the end of it is that God may be just, yet the Justifier of the ungodly; that all his attributes may be magnified, and that none may have reason to boast.

"As a sinner, then, and entirely renouncing all claims for acceptance on any thing that I have done or can do, I come to God, depending on His promises and the faithfulness of His word; and I come for these benefits,—that I may obtain remission of sins—justification—regeneration, or a renewed mind—holiness—righteousness—daily strength, and increase of Christian grace—and, finally, the entire restoration of the divine image, and eternal happiness in the next world. All this I hope to receive from the alone merits of Jesus my Redeemer, through faith, and dependence on the promises of God.

"This seems the main doctrine of the Christian Church, and there seem few really pious of any denomination who disbelieve it. It was held by Luther, Wickliffe, Calvin, Arminius, and the Reformers of our own Church; but, what is still more, it is plainly revealed in Scripture.

"Therefore I heartily bless God that he has not only made known this most comfortable truth, but made it so clear, that none can easily mistake it.

"*May* 14*th*, 1808. FAITH.—The means by which this justification is obtained is faith. Faith is the hand stretched out, and laying hold on the blessings of the gospel. Faith is a lively dependence on Christ, for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption: it is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things

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not seen." We hope for eternal happiness, deliverance from the power and guilt of sin, an entire conformity to the will of God. Faith assures us of these, as much as if we had them. Faith takes the promise of God, and lives upon it, with an absolute certainty that it will come to pass.

"Faith is the gift of God: it generally comes through hearing and reading the word of God; it is obtained by prayer; its subject is the promises of God; its fruit is that peace of God which passeth all understanding—a settled and assured confidence in the goodness and mercy of God, producing a calm, resigned, and happy temper of mind, superior to all the vexations and cares of life. Its effect is a hatred of all sin, an increasing degree of holiness, inward and outward; regarding chiefly the eye of God, and greatly disregarding the eye of man. It shows itself by love towards God and man; and it ends with this life, for then it is swallowed up in possession and enjoyment of all its glorious objects.

"Grant me, O Lord, that faith which worketh by love, which is well pleasing in thy sight, and to which thou hast annexed such glorious promises, for Jesus my Redeemer's sake.

"*May* 21*st*, 1808. REGENERATION.—We come into this world, corrupt and defiled, prone to evil, and averse to good. This must be evident to all. Now Scripture speaks of a change to be made in us—of a work to be wrought, and a new nature, as it were, to be given us, (John iii. 3,) before we are capable of eternal happiness. It becomes then of infinite consequence, to ascertain what this change produces.

"It brings a different spirit from that of the world, and

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from that with which we come into the world; for it is said, 'Be not conformed to this world.' 'The friendship of the world is enmity with God.' The great pursuits of the world are pleasure, honours, and riches; the great passion of the world is pride. Now if we can willingly sacrifice these for the sake of religion, we give good evidence that we are so far regenerate. But let us inquire further, what is the great motive to our actions? are we excited to exertion by a desire of worldly things, or by other motives? Are these chiefly in our thoughts and conversation? Are we greatly grieved at the loss, or gratified with the acquisition of these? We are happy if we can say with truth, They are indifferent to me, yea, I rather consider worldly advantages as a debt which I must repay with interest,—as a talent for which I am accountable.

"It would take a long account to describe what this change really produces. I will mention what Scripture seems to point out as the chief characteristics of a real Christian, of one who has been turned from darkness to light.

"The natural man walks by sight; those things which his senses perceive as desirable, are the chief objects of his pursuit. The regenerate man walks by faith, the favour of God and eternal happiness are the chief objects of his pursuit.

"The regenerate man has, in many respects, the same dispositions that a child has towards its parent. His whole dependence is on God for every thing he wants; and he has great confidence that God will supply them. He is meek and lowly, he loves his Heavenly Father with pure simplicity and affection, he receives His word with

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a similar desire to that which infants have for their mother's milk: it is grateful and pleasant.

"While Jesus Christ is despised and rejected by, and a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to, the natural man, He is inestimably precious to the believer; he knows that without Him he could neither do any thing nor have any hope. He becomes everything to the Christian. The Christian has but one character, he is the same in all companies, for his eye is chiefly fixed on God, and he strives to disregard the opinion of men. Regeneration is the beginning of the Christian life. No one can be saved without regeneration.

"Let me then be careful to observe whether I am regenerate, and be constant in prayer and watchfulness, that the marks of my being so may be clear and evident; then I shall possess that peace of God which passeth all understanding.

"*June* 26, 1808. SANCTIFICATION.—As regeneration is the beginning, so sanctification is the continuance of the Christian life. It is the gift of God, and the production of his Spirit in the soul of man. This is that holiness without which no man shall enter heaven. It consists in a sincere desire to be obedient to God in everything, and is entirely inconsistent with any habitual and allowed practice of known sin.

"The gospel of Jesus Christ sets before us such superior motives and means for the practice of holiness, as no other religion or system of morality can do. The foundation of all holiness and real goodness must be love to God; for that obedience will be very constrained and imperfect, which does not proceed from love. But how can a man love God, unless he knows that God has loved

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and will love him? that it is the desire of God that the wicked should be saved and reconciled to God? Now the Christian religion sets forth these very things as motives to the practice of holiness. It tells us, that we are all bought with a price; that God first loved us; that He so loved us as to give his dear and only Son, that we might obtain remission of sins; that He hath given us eternal life. The apostle beseeches us, by the mercies of God, to present our bodies a living sacrifice to God. And what nobler or more animating motive can be urged? The Christian service is perfect freedom—it is a labour and a life of love. And it not only sets forth these motives, but it provides sufficient means for the attainment of holiness. We are told by words which cannot deceive,—Ask, and ye shall receive.—'My Father will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.' So now we may in humility, yet with faith and confidence, lay claim to these privileges and blessings, and surely we can return nothing less than our hearts, and that is all which God requires.

"By sanctification our thoughts become devoted to God. He is in all our thoughts; that is, whatever we do is performed chiefly because He has commanded it, and not because it will add to our possessions or honours. But this is an unceasing work. Our chief care and attention is not about the pleasures, riches, or honours of this world. We seek not the honour that cometh of man, but that which comes from God."

The following letter to his mother, on the subject of worldly amusements, was written soon after he went to New Inn. It is marked, not only by a clearness of discernment as to his own line of duty, but by a candour and

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willingness to make allowances for others, which shows how much religion had already softened and moulded his naturally firm and unbending character.

May 25, 1808.

MY DEAREST MOTHER,

I feel a kind of weight on my mind, till I have answered your last; and therefore, though I have little enough time to spare, I write sooner perhaps than you expect. First, let me thank you for your very affectionate letter, and add that I esteem your cautions and advice to be almost invaluable, and infinitely more kind than the best deserved praise; for praise is but a kind of delicious poison, which we gladly receive, but which is extremely dangerous. It is difficult to think lowly of ourselves, when others think well of us, yet humility is one chief characteristic of a Christian. Let me assure you then, in all sincerity, that you cannot show me a greater proof of affection, than by pointing out my errors, and I am sure love will concur with duty in making me endeavour to alter any thing I am convinced is wrong.

I acknowledge I was wrong in suggesting that dancing was inconsistent with the Christian character, and I should rather have said that the objection I had to it chiefly applied to myself. You have convinced me of this by your letter, but I cannot say you convince me that I should be justified, in general, in joining in the amusements of the world, and among the rest, in dancing. I will give you some further reasons for this; only recollect, in writing to my parents, I mention motives which influence me, which I would think it idle to tell to the world in general; and that I do not now suggest that these reasons ought to have the same weight with others. I need not tell my mother that Christianity chiefly regards the thoughts, motives, and affections; that it requires that every thought, word, and deed should be with a single eye to the glory of God; that we must love God with all our heart; and let me add that remarkable text, "to be spiritually-minded is life and peace, but to be carnally-minded is death." Now, whenever there

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is a command, it is a duty to use all means in assisting us to obey it, and to avoid all those things which obstruct the performance of it. Whenever, therefore, I find anything, not a matter of duty, destroying or weakening my desire to please God, and strengthening my attachment to the world, it becomes my duty to refrain from it; this I find to be the case with dancing and public amusements in general. They make my mind lighter and less serious, and answer none of the purposes of a relaxation. For the very same reason, I dislike much company or bustle, into which I never yet went, without coming back extremely dissatisfied with myself. They estrange my heart from religion. There are many things, not expressly forbidden in Scripture, which my mother will not, I dare say, justify. There are not rules for every case, but only general rules. Such texts as these would condemn, I think, the general amusements of the world. "Be not conformed to the world." "Love not the world, *nor the things of the world;* whosoever loveth the world, the love of the Father is not in him." The essence of pure religion is said to be, for a man to "keep himself unspotted from the world;" and, lest we should regard little things as matters of indifference, it is said, "He that despiseth small things shall fall by little and little." Thus, though we are not expressly forbidden to play at cards, or to go to the theatre, these commands would, I think, keep one who is fearful of offending from those things. My mother says, we ought not to impose new difficulties; but I really think this is removing some of the dangers and difficulties of the Christian warfare. It is surely far more difficult to preserve a heavenly mind when you join the world, than when you keep out of it. I could not with any sincerity pray, "Lead us not into temptation," if I voluntarily went into, what would be to me, a place of temptation. It is true, there is a temperance in all things, but how careful ought we to be lest this degenerate into lukewarmness! Many, I fear, think they hit the happy medium, who may too late discover their irretrievable and dreadful mistake. If I gave a caution to my heart, and in this respect I must know it better

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than my mother, it would not be, 'Beware of enthusiasm,' but 'Beware of coldness, deadness, worldliness, and sensuality.' You seem to think me more earnest in religion than I really am. I know that my principles and desires are far better than my practice; no wonder therefore my letters (which only you see, and which contain my principles) make me seem better than my life really is. As to enthusiasm, I think a man may be called an enthusiast, who acts vehemently, and carries matters to excess, without a sufficient or rational motive. We need not then wonder that the world, in general, call the really religious, enthusiasts; for they perceive not the inducements to their actions, they are not affected with the shortness of time, the importance of eternity, the love of God who spared not his only Son, and the excellence of a life of holiness; and they see men despising and disregarding riches, honours, and pleasures, and whatever they hold valuable, without being sensible of their motives. But may we not fairly turn the tables, and call men of the world, who make those things which are but for a moment, the chief object of their pursuit, the real enthusiasts? We know it is right to be zealously affected in a good cause, and we know that Paul, and our Saviour himself, were said to be mad, by worldly men. I have some hope that what I have said will, in a great measure, relieve my mother from any fear of my being in danger of enthusiasm.

Having said so much about dancing, I think I ought to add, I really do not esteem it to be a matter of much consequence. If we do not find it deadens the religious spirit of our minds, it would be unreasonable in any one to object to the moderate use of it as a relaxation. The main fundamentals of religion are of infinitely superior importance. These are the life of faith, humility, self-denial, and love; the necessary consequences of these graces are the essential points, justice, mercy, and truth. Let us cultivate these principles, with a lively dependence on Christ, and earnest prayer for promised assistance, at the foot of the cross; for these virtues can hardly be genuine, if they do not spring from a sense of the love of our Redeemer to us, of our being bought with a price, and of

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our infinite need of Him. If we practise these things, whether we dance or abstain is a matter too indifferent for much attention. I should be extremely sorry to condemn others even for serious sins; much more to blame them for matters of little importance, and I hope my letters have not latterly contained any thing that can be construed in this way. It is the peculiar character of the Pharisee to despise others, and those words have always appeared to me very awful, "Judge not, lest ye be judged." Those who wish to be religious, have need of great care in this respect, for religion makes one man so really superior to another, and those who despise and neglect it are in reality so contemptible, that it requires much self-knowledge and humility, to prevent us from being censorious and condemning them. But we ought to know that, were it not for mere grace, we might and should have been much worse, that we cannot tell but that the person we condemn, might in reality be better than ourselves. It is an excellent rule of my brother John's, "You can hardly be too strict with regard to yourself, nor too liberal with regard to others."

Worldly people, in general, think we make religion far too strict and gloomy, by depriving ourselves of those things they are pleased to call amusements and pleasures; but are we to be thought gloomy, because we disparage and dislike what they delight in? Their pleasures are generally absurd and trifling, and frequently, if not always, accompanied with bitterness; they never are completely satisfied and content. Religion, on the other hand, lays the foundation of lasting cheerfulness and perfect tranquillity. All the pleasures of domestic life, the dear society of friends, especially of Christian friends, are rather increased. The beauties of nature are doubled when we can say, "My Father made them all;" if such a scene is displayed in a state of sin, what glorious things shall we behold in a state of perfection? There are no fears of want, no anxiety after riches, no distress at temporal losses to the Christian. My mother well knows how great the pleasures of religion are, how pleasant it is to read the precious pro-

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mises of God in sacred Scripture, and take them to ourselves—how pleasant it is to come to the throne of grace with full confidence, yet profound humility, and be certain, since God's word cannot deceive, that we shall obtain relief from all our wants. We know we have a Father, tender, gracious, and full of love, reconciled to us through the blood of his Son, always about us. We can cast away all fear, for we know in whom we have trusted, and that in Jesus we have plenteous redemption from all guilt, sin, and misery. The rich hopes of that glorious and eternal inheritance prepared for us, into which any moment may transport us, fill us at times with joy too great to describe. There we shall love Him without coldness or interruption. There we shall see Him without this veil of flesh which at times keeps us from Him, and obstructs and darkens our view, and we shall dwell with Him for ever and ever. Therefore all cares and troubles are things of little moment, and nothing but sin can disturb the happy tranquillity of mind the Christian possesses. We wrong our own souls by not thinking on these things, and we forget it is as much a command to rejoice, as to keep the Sabbath holy. Indeed I fear we strangely neglect this duty.

It is a great satisfaction that my parents derive pleasure from my correspondence. I generally send the thoughts which are strongest on my mind, or which most impress me, and of course many of them are not original, but that does not lessen the truth of them. I fear this is the last long letter I shall be able to write, as all my time must be given to business and reading law. Mr. A. is very civil and kind; he gave, or rather offered me, a ticket for the play, which I declined, of course as handsomely as I could. I have seen less of Mr. W. than I could wish, they are a most valuable family, or in one word, comprehending every thing, they are Christians. To be this is the highest summit of the ambition of

Your dutiful and affectionate son,

E. BICKERSTETH.

The same spirit of charity is manifested in the follow-

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ing extract from a letter written July 1808, to his sister Mary, who had been offended by the gloomy manners of a professor of religion.

"I confess I like to see a religious man cheerful, and joining in all the innocent pleasures of life; and indeed one may be astonished how those who are not religious can be cheerful. Surely it is only their blindness and ignorance of truth that prevents their being perpetually gloomy and miserable, and almost sinking into despair. But let us not forget, that if the religious man has most real ground for cheerfulness, and has joys that the world knows nothing of, he has also sorrows of which the world knows nothing. He finds sin a burden of which the world knows not the weight; he has perhaps doubts about his eternal salvation which may much distress him; he has fears of dishonouring God's cause, and is fearful, perhaps, that he will not be able to persevere in religion. Let us not then presume to blame those who, we have reason to hope, are sincere in religion, though there may be some things in their manner we dislike. Let us learn to consider those most dear to us who are most religious; if we do so, it is a sure sign we love God. However amiable and pleasing the manners of those may be, who, as we have every reason to fear, are not religious, it is not a good sign to be much pleased with their company; but we have some evidence that we are advanced Christians, when we love a man merely because he is religious, though his manners and habits may be in many respects disagreeable to us."

Though Edward Bickersteth quitted the parental roof at an early age, absence did not weaken his strong home affections. A visit to Kirkby, which he secured about

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once in two years, was always anticipated with great delight. He had hoped to enjoy that pleasure in the summer of 1808. "I look forward," he wrote in April, "to the hope of meeting my parents and sisters again; and if we can contrive to spend most of our time in quiet together, it will be a great increase of the pleasure, for I must confess I have now very little taste for the pleasures of company and bustle; it seems for the most part to consist of unmeaning compliments, and an anxious desire to kill, not to redeem time." When he removed to New Inn, he hoped that the change would not hinder, though it might somewhat delay, his journey. The following letter shows how he struggled against the feeling of disappointment, when he feared he must relinquish the pleasant prospect.

"You must not now expect to see me this summer, as I have every reason to believe it will be impracticable for me to have that pleasure. Mr. A. has given orders that no one shall go into the country, till all the bills in the office are made out; so that it does not now depend on my own exertions: in fact, it is as much as saying that no one shall go, for the bills have never been made out in vacation. One cannot blame Mr. A., for it is rather unreasonable that his clerks should go into the country till his bills are made out, and he be left behind in town: yet, if I had not gone to New Inn, without doubt, if all had been well, I could have come to have seen you. There is still a possibility, but I dare not encourage the hope.

"I try to consider labour as the penalty due for sin, and to be grateful that the punishment is only temporal: indeed of how little consequence is it what are the troubles or labours of the short period of life! As Hale justly

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says,'It is but our inn,'—we are only here for a few short days, and then we leave it for ever. Do not blame me for dwelling on these thoughts; for these, and a firm confidence of being reconciled to God, and of His gracious presence and providence, make every thing else of so little consequence, and give such tranquillity and cheerfulness in the midst of troubles and bustles, that I can hardly help, when writing to my dearest friends, making mention of them.

"We still go to New Inn at nine in the morning, and leave it at nine at night. I had intended to have gone at six in the morning to make out bills, and to stay till ten at night; but while there is no prospect of getting into the country, I feel no inclination to do this. It would be vain to deny I am disappointed in my hopes of going to see you. I had formed many pleasing dreams of quiet leisure, and delightful conversation with my parents, sisters, and brother, and of enjoying the tranquil and calm pleasures of the country, but now I must pore over musty bills and so forth: I was going to say, Forbid it, O ye Fates! but I have done, only begging you will believe me, wherever I am, and however engaged, still,

"Your very affectionate Son.

"E. Bickersteth."

His wishes however were at length realised, and the end of August saw him again on his way to Kirkby. "I feel quite animated," he wrote, "at the prospect of seeing you again so soon, and of coming to make a short stay in the midst of friends more dear than any in the world. Mr. A. gave me six weeks of his own accord, for I did not mention any time. He has been much pleased at

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seeing so many bills made out. The hope of a little quiet, after the almost intolerable bustle and noise of this busy agency-office, is quite delightful. I shall bring down a few law books, for I do not wish at the end of six weeks to have the idea troubling my mind of having wasted so much time.

The following reflections, on his intended visit, are found in his journal.

"*August* 21, 1808. I have last week given way far too much to worldly objects: the hope of going to my friends in the country has been far too much on my mind; for this I have laboured; for this I have been diligent, as if it were the great object of my pursuit. Alas! how the poor insignificant things of this world animate me, while the great object of my hopes, and the immense and important things of another world, are almost entirely forgotten; but I ought to remember that my labour is actual sin, if all motives to it are not subordinate to Christian motives. If it pleases God, I shall go this week, or the beginning of next, to Westmoreland. I know, by experience, changes and bustle are unfavourable to religion. O let me then be earnest in prayer, that this may not be so, that I and my friends may mutually benefit each other, so that even in heaven we may reflect with pleasure on our meeting here below. But other reflections arise. It is very possible I may never return: it is possible I may enjoy no more pleasant sabbaths in my own quiet room, and instead of giving an account of my thoughts and actions to my own conscience, I may be called to the bar of heaven. I may possibly write no more in this book, never more in this place enjoy the pleasure of communion with my own heart.

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Thy will, blessed Father, in all things, and entirely, be done. It will be no bad change if I get heaven for earth,—certainty and enjoyment for doubt and fighting,—a sight of the living God without a veil, instead of the dark and obscure views I now have. Thy will be done only; whether I die or whether I live, may I glorify Thee, and be instrumental in the salvation of immortal souls."

The pleasant six weeks passed rapidly away, and business claimed him again. On the 7th of October he wrote—"Labour and business, and London bustle, are very distasteful at present; but we must strive to make our duties our pleasures, and so they will be if we act on Christian motives; for then we are conscious we are gaining the favour of God, and how can that person be unhappy who has the favour of God?"

This year was a gloomy period in the history of Europe; the growing power of Bonaparte filled the hearts of men with dismay. Mr. Bickersteth wrote thus to his parents in December: "Sad news from Spain. We can only look up to the great Cause and Governor of all, with resignation to his will. All certainly looks very black, but to a Christian mind all is ordered for the best. It is remarkable how almost every nation in Europe has within these twelve years been scourged by war; Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Holland, Prussia, Denmark and Sweden, and now Spain and Portugal; and yet this country, by the mercy of Providence, has been spared. We ought indeed to be grateful, and to take warning."

The great pressure of worldly business resting on Mr. Bickersteth proved, as he had feared, a spiritual temptation; and the glow of heavenly joy which marked both

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his correspondence and his diary in the earlier part of 1808, was lost towards its close. He was not, however, satisfied with this state, and his journal is full of earnest pleading, both with his own spirit, and with his God.

"*November* 27, 1808. My mind is much distracted by business. But, alas! not only so, it is also far gone from all serious religion,—much occupied about the cares and troubles, advantages, and rewards, of the world. On one day, I was much depressed in mind by what I conceived a mistake of my own in business. I sought relief from God in morning prayer, and begged that *that* and every other event might bring me more to Him. O how pleasant was that prayer! In the course of the day I found that what I thought had been neglected, was really done. God hears our prayer in distress, blessed be His name! Now I would, O God my Father, strengthen my resolution, forsake all those evil habits into which I have lately fallen, and begin more thoroughly to devote myself to Thee."

"*December* 18, 1808. Come, O my soul, and let us reason together. Conscience is placed within thee by a gracious Lord, on purpose to awaken thee, to deliver thee from sin and death, and to raise thee to life and joy. Know I not that God is holy, and will not let iniquity go unpunished? Know I not that I cannot have the favour of God, while evil habits are indulged? How many days, and weeks, and months have I now passed, without one lively hope of eternal happiness, one delightful sense of pardoned sin, one transporting thought of the favour of God and the love of Christ, and the hope of dwelling with Him for ever! Have I any thing in the indulgence of sin, that is so sweet and pleasant as these?

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Is the indulgence of the flesh gratifying to reflect upon? or are pride, and covetousness, and anger, passions which make the mind easy and happy? What profit have I in these things? But consider, further, I have renounced these things. I have vowed against them. O how guilty to break my resolutions and vows, and to live in the practice of what I have so often promised God to forsake."

"*January* 1, 1809. I have much pleasure in looking at the sabbath occupations of last year. Through the alone grace of God, they have generally been religiously passed, though there is enough to humble me here, especially respecting the state of my heart in divine service, which has very frequently been cold and wandering: this has been the case particularly in the evening. But I am persuaded that, through the goodness of God, nothing has been so conducive to keep alive the spirit of religion in the soul as the right employment of the sabbath. O may God make this a means of my entirely renouncing the world, and giving myself up to him."

In the beginning of 1809 he commenced a daily record of his conduct, which he kept up with some interruptions for six months. His motives for so doing are thus given.

"Time, when compared with eternity, is infinitely short; when considered with regard to our ignorance of the period of our death, quite uncertain. When I reflect that upon its due improvement depends an eternal state of happiness or misery, I must ever consider its right employment as the most important business in life. To further this end, I this day resolve, through God's blessing, to keep a more accurate journal of my actions. By this means I shall have, while it is in my power to correct it, a knowledge

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of what is wrong, and shall be enabled in some measure to ascertain what will be my sentence at the day of judgment. The chief things I have to enquire after are—

"1. My thoughts on waking and time of arising.

"2. Devotions and Scripture reading.

"3. Doing all to the glory of God.

"4. Meals—self-indulgence.

"5. Business—diligence, regularity, no eye-service.

"6. Evenings—reading, writing.

"7. Thoughts—spiritual, often raised to God.

"8. Discourse.

"9. Opportunities of doing good to others.

"10. Love to God—how shown.

"11. Last night's devotions, and thoughts on lying down.

"12. Behaviour to superiors, equals, inferiors."

While earnest in using the means of grace, Mr. Bickersteth often had to lament the difficulty of carrying out the spirit of his devotions in his daily life; and passages like the following occur in his Journal.

"*April* 30, 1809. Another mis-spent week, another week given to self-indulgence and sin. I exhibit the strongest contrast in the world. At morning prayer I utter the most earnest petitions with many tears against my sins; yet when I go into the world I again forget God, and fall into sin; the temptation is renewed and I fall. Through God's grace, I will not any longer be the servant and the slave of sin; and I say it on a reasonable and good foundation, for I know in whom I have trusted, and that He is fully able to deliver me."

Birthdays were seasons of special searching of heart, and occasions of reviewing the Lord's past dealings with

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his soul. The following prayer is taken from the birth-day meditations in 1809.

"To a broken heart, to a contrite spirit, Thou hast promised mercy. Here then, Lord, bowing low before Thee on this sacred day, I entreat the Lord, who gave me a living soul, (alas, that that soul should have rebelled against its Creator) I ask in the name, and through the merits of my Redeemer, for a gift at Thy hands. O my Father; O Author of my being, from whom alone comes every thing that I desire, who ordereth, who governeth the world, I ask not riches, I ask not honour, I ask not worldly pleasures, I ask not even health at Thy hands; these give or take from me as is Thy good pleasure, but this I ask, O my God, and deny not my request, great is the thing I ask, but Thou art great, O God, and rich in mercy; undeserving I am of it, but O magnify Thy grace, and have mercy on the unworthy. I ask then this gift, O God, my God; a penitent broken spirit, and a contrite heart, true repentance, true conversion, a lively faith in Jesus Christ and him crucified; a new spirit and a sanctified heart, and finally, that I may be with Thee where Thou art, and be received into the joy of my Lord. And may I have such a sense of Thy love here, that through Thy Spirit my heart may be filled with love towards Thee, and towards man. Hear me, O my God, hear me. Let me not deceive my own soul, but henceforth work out my salvation with fear and trembling, Thou, my God, working in me. Hear, O hear me, for Jesus my Redeemer's sake. Amen."

The Easter Sacrament of 1809 was a time of special blessing. He writes as follows:—

"*April* 2, 1809. *Easter Sunday.* Blessed be God for all

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His mercies to an obstinate hard-hearted rebel. Blessed be God for His unspeakable grace. I have just received a most comfortable Sacrament ;—glory be to Him. From a sense of great guilt, just after having been there on Friday, and of indulging the same sins, after having solemnly renounced them, and also from a sense of having neglected due preparation, I had determined not to go—but after breakfast I thought (it was God who gave the thought) that I would go and fall upon my knees, and beseech His direction : I went and acknowledged, that from my unworthiness I thought it might lead to danger, and hardening my heart, should I go, but I referred the matter to God. A thought of the infinite mercy of God, and that the blood of Christ cleanseth from sin, prevailing in my heart, I determined and said, I would throw myself upon the mercy of God. Who ever trusted in His mercy, and was disappointed ? Before I received the bread and cup, I had a serious, calm, composed, and earnest prayer, in which I surveyed the nature of the sacrifice, and sacrament set before me ;—besought God that I might go with a due sense of my unworthiness—with a lively faith and an ardent love to Him who had provided this feast. I then went up to the altar, meditating on Isaiah liii ;—'He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, by His stripes we were healed.' I set Him before me, and believed He bore my sins. I thought also of those lines ; 'There is a fountain filled with blood,' &c. I then received, I hope with a thankful heart, and returned to my seat, praising God for His unspeakable mercies to me, and to His whole Church, and beseeching His blessing upon His Church. I then prayed against my particular sins, and had some delight-

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ful thoughts, in the hope, that we all who had that day been partakers of the body and blood of Christ, should hereafter, and that not long hence, be with Him in His kingdom, in such joy, 'as eye had not seen, nor the heart of man conceived.' Blessed be God for this hope, I have written this down for the comfort and instruction of my soul hereafter."

Mr. Bickersteth's journals bear ample evidence to the practical, all-pervading character of his religious principles. The following circumstance, though in itself trivial, is not without value as illustrative of this. The time allowed, at his office, for dinner and recreation, was two hours, but when he dined, as he frequently did, with his friends in Harpur Street, by remaining with them at tea, he made the time of absence three hours. He was not so strictly bound to hours as the clerks who were not articled; but he knew that by this he was setting a bad example, and that it was not agreeable to his superior; scrutinizing his own conscience, he found that the circumstance of his superior's absence from the office at that hour had encouraged his laxity. The indulgence, however, was hard to relinquish. The following notice of it occurs in his journal:

"*April* 9, 1809. What chiefly troubles me is, an habitual, wilful, known sin, and such a sin is entirely inconsistent with a state of grace. I cannot be sincere in my resolutions to oppose it. Tis true I resolve against it, but it is still indulged. Well, through grace, I will pluck off this right hand, and give up this right eye to God. Consider now. Have I not devoted myself to God, and given up every thing to Him? Well, here is an instance where I break this vow. O my God, forgive

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me, and subdue this sin for me. Alas! I do not expect to be free from sins of the heart in this world, and I am aware these will sometimes break out into open acts, but as I know they are hateful to God, destroy peace, and offend the Lord my Redeemer, I will daily watch and strive against them in the strength of the Lord. And may I be permitted to long for that glorious time, when I shall be free from them, when I shall be with the Lord for ever and ever, and enjoy the light of His countenance without interruption."

The same tenderness of conscience was shown with regard to the purchase of books. His delight in his library amounted almost to a passion: the old-book-stall was his constant resort, and the price of a dinner was occasionally reserved, to procure some coveted treasure. He was watchfully alive, however, to the temptations to which this taste might lead, and notices like the following occur in his journal:

"I have met with some excellent rules, which, through God's grace, I will adopt. To associate an act of charity with every act of self-indulgence,—thus, if there is a book my duty does not require me to get, I must do an act of charity first, and if I cannot do both, let both alone till I can. . . . I spend too much time and money in acquiring books, and I read them superficially. I do not act as if accountable for time, let me beg for grace herein. . . . Lost an hour this evening at a book-sale. Never go again, it is mere waste of time."

So rapid was Mr. Bickersteth's progress in professional knowledge, that, in the spring of 1809, Mr. Bleasdale wished him to leave New Inn, and return to Hatton Court as managing clerk. Circumstances prevented this ar-

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rangement taking place before the autumn; but it was no small proof of the confidence reposed in him, that after only two years and a half of service, he should be considered qualified for such a situation. He looked forward to the change with pleasure. "There is so much anxiety of mind," he wrote, "attending the multitude of causes I now have, (I believe I have about 80), and so much bustling business at New Inn, that my mind is half distracted at times; and though I have—I think I may justly say, through the kind providence of God—escaped mistakes and errors of any importance hitherto, yet the fear of them is harassing. I long for that state of mind, which considers every thing indifferent but the favour of God. If we are conscious that the ever-present, Almighty God is our friend, what need we fear, and what may we not hope for?"

This year he became acquainted with his future brother-in-law, Mr. Thomas Bignold, a young man of his own age, who had come up to see the agency practice of Bleasdale and Co.'s offices at New Inn, previously to becoming an attorney at Norwich. Mr. Bickersteth was immediately introduced to him by their superior, as a person well able to give him legal information. The first impression he made upon him was anything but prepossessing; as, at this time, despite his mother's admonitions and his best resolutions to the contrary, he was often very regardless of personal appearance. "Not much of a gentleman,"—Mr. Bignold thought to himself,—"but I will gain what I can from him, and show him courtesy in return." The whispered hint soon reached him—"You will get a great deal out of Bickersteth, but he is a terrible Methodist." He did not care to show in such society the delight the in-

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formation gave him, but he treasured it in his mind. A short time afterwards he invited him to his rooms. His new friend at once turned eagerly to the book-case: on comparing notes, they found how closely their selection of books and their studies corresponded; a strong proof to them of the similarity of their tastes and principles. Mr. Bigrold soon retracted his hasty impression, when he found that a somewhat uncouth exterior had concealed not only a gentleman, but a scholar, and a Christian. The friendship ripened fast, and became to both a source of pleasure and spiritual profit. In the prospect of his undertaking a situation which would make it more difficult for his services to be spared, Mr. Bickersteth had obtained permission to visit Westmoreland again in the summer of 1809. He urged his friend to accompany him, which he consented to do, on condition that Mr. Bickersteth would take Norwich on the way, that he might introduce him to his family there. From Norwich they went to Lynn, and thence by sea to Hull. When they were in Westmoreland, some days were devoted to an excursion among the lakes. This summer vacation was a season of much social enjoyment, and law business afforded no very pleasing contrast on his return. He wrote, November 6, "This is the first day of the term, and it is something like what Black Monday used to be at school. I have rather a dread of it, as my present situation is both new, difficult, and responsible. You may think me one of the richest men you know, when I tell you my present expenditure is about £3000 a-year; but of all this, like other rich men, I must give a strict account, and it will be expected that every part of it should be properly disposed of. I am however happy to be in that situation

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where I can be most useful to Mr. Bleasdale, and which of course will be most advantageous to myself. I can trust in God that I shall not fall into any important mistake; and I hope my own exertions will not be wanting in what I know to be my duty."

His enjoyment at Kirkby this summer did not arise simply from relaxation from the cares of business; he was cheered by observing that a good work was advancing in his own family. His own efforts and those of his beloved brother John, had not been without effect on the minds of his sisters. As early as the year 1807, during their parents' absence in London, they had introduced family-worship, and, on their return, they obtained permission for its continuance. This year they occupied their Sabbath evenings in teaching a class of children at their father's house. Mr. Bickersteth was very anxious to encourage them in this, and every other work of love. In March he had written thus to his eldest sister:—"You will, I dare say, have many delightful hours among the poor at Kirkby. My constant employment necessarily precludes me from this pleasure; but you know on what the inquiry chiefly runs at the last day, "When I was sick and in prison ye visited me; naked, ye clothed me: forasmuch as ye did it to the least of my disciples, ye did it unto me." This shows the motive from which Christian actions proceed; that is, from love to Him who loved us, and gave himself for us. We may think the apostles and immediate followers of our Lord happy, in having daily opportunities of showing their reverence and love to their Saviour; and that if we had been in their situation, what pleasure it would have given us to have obeyed the least intimation of His will. We have only to ima-

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gine, what is entirely true, that His eye is always upon us, and that He actually considers the good done to his disciples as done to himself, in order to partake of that happiness. I know not a more delightful encouragement to do good than this. . . . I am teaching the little girl in Hatton Court, Woodd's Shortest Catechism; she comes on slowly, and is not half so clever as are some of your little ones. Pray tell me if they were glad to see you, and continue attentive. I trust you are laying the foundation for many useful characters; for a true Christian is certainly the most useful character in life, and many of the children may hereafter have cause to bless you for ever, for the instructions you and our dear Charlotte are now giving them."

On his return from Kirkby he wrote thus to the same sister:—"I should like to be well acquainted with ——: I believe they are Dissenters, but certainly he is not a narrow-minded, bigoted Dissenter. I had rather he was a Churchman, because I am convinced the Church of England approaches nearer to Christian perfection in its Articles and Liturgy, than any Church with which I am acquainted. Yet I think it would be extremely narrow-minded to shun a man's company, merely because he was a Dissenter. The main essentials, such as faith, love, humility, and piety, are what one ought chiefly to regard, and to be fondest of the company of those who have most of these, however we may differ in lesser points."

Mr. Bignold's friendship continued to be a source of much pleasure. "I believe," he wrote, "we have very few secrets between us, and not a day passes without our seeing each other." A proposal made by his friend that he should at some future time share his business in Norwich,

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opened a prospect as advantageous to his interests as it was grateful to his feelings. He had firmly resolved not to enter into partnership with any man whose principles he did not most thoroughly approve. His present engagement with Mr. Bleasdale made the other but a distant prospect, the realizing of which he committed cheerfully to his heavenly Father. "I am quite willing," he wrote to his parents, "to resign all future events into the hands of a good Providence, yet it is certainly a duty not to overlook any honourable means of temporal advantage. What a pleasant consideration it is, that we have a Father always about us, who careth for us, and who will take care to provide for us, if we are not wilfully wanting to ourselves. He has given us our being, and we may be sure He will give us necessary support, for the 'life is more than meat.'"

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CHAPTER V.

SPIRITUAL PROGRESS.—DESIRE FOR THE MINISTRY.

A. D. 1809—1810.

If we look merely at the outward circumstances of Mr. Bickersteth's life at this period, their quiet, unvarying course offers few materials for biography; but his journals and letters tell of another and a hidden life, full of the deepest interest. While all around him in the daily routine of business and study was unchanged, the greatest changes were passing over his own spirit, and a conflict, of which the world knows nothing, was carried on there. The latter part of the year 1809 was a period of spiritual decline, and it is instructive to notice that he himself dated that decline from a mis-spent sabbath. In May of the following year, he wrote thus: "I see more and more that, last summer, I sadly fell away from God, so that God left me to myself, and I lost, for many months, the light of His countenance and the joy of His presence. I would note it particularly in my heart, that this fall began with a neglected sabbath, (June 25,) a sabbath spent from home. O what abundant reason I have to watch and pray always!"

If, however, a neglected sabbath was the beginning of a fall, that sacred day with its holy exercises, even in these

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months of darkness, perpetually recalled better and holier thoughts.

"*July* 10, 1809. Every day I seem to have to fight a fresh battle, and every day I seem to retire vanquished: can this continue long? Nay, I feel my strength to decline, while my enemies get stronger. After apparently most anxious and earnest prayers, I fall into the same sins I have prayed against. After passing more than an hour this morning confessing and bewailing my sins, I went to church, and there fell into the same sins I had been praying against. How discouraging and disheartening is all this! But O my soul, thou must not trifle; this, this is the day of grace—the day of vengeance succeeds. Oh! while it is yet called "to-day," entreat the Lord for salvation, and he is mighty to save. Resist the devil yet more, and he will flee from thee: whenever he assaults thee, let his temptations but send thee for help to One that is mighty to deliver. Recollect, it is of infinite importance that thou yield not an inch, and the Captain of thy salvation will, in due time, crown thee with victory. O now let me go into His presence and lay open my wants before Him."

"*August* 29, 1809. I am cultivating the life-estate, and neglecting the fee-simple. The inheritance is despised, while the leasehold is fertilized by all the care and attention I can give it. O in what words can I describe the folly and madness of this! I am convinced that religion is the true and the only thing of real importance, yet I act as if it were false, and of no importance whatever. What contradiction is here! yet this is a just description of my life, and my conscience pleads guilty. Ah! my soul, whilst the day remaineth, return unto the

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Lord thy God, and seek His strength with due zeal and sincerity, and thou wilt assuredly obtain it."

It has been mentioned that he was in the habit of dining with some intimate friends every Sunday. The following extract will show on what account the practice was relinquished.

"*February* 4, 1810. I heard this morning an impressive sermon from Mr. Budd, on the words, 'Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy.' He pointed out many things in which I have failed latterly, as—

"1st. Want of preparation on the Saturday evening for the Sabbath: this, which I once attended to, I have latterly altogether neglected. Through God's grace, (there is my only strength,) I will hereafter give Saturday evening to preparation.

"2nd. Visiting on the Sabbath. I have constantly for some years dined with some friends this day in Harpur Street, at some distance from my rooms. I think I do not spend the evening so profitably and religiously as if I were to stay at home, and employ my time more immediately on things relating to God. I think, after this Sunday, of giving this up. May God direct me herein, and in every thing enable me to take that course, which will be most for the benefit of my immortal soul.

"3rd. Sleeping longer. Of this with shame I must confess, I have been guilty. My rooms not being prepared for me so early, I have indulged longer in bed. But this is but a weak excuse, and I ought to take undiminished shame upon myself for this; through God's grace I will do so no more."

"*February* 12, 1810. I think I can hardly express the coldness and deadness of my heart. In this morning's

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service I went through the prayers with my lips, but my heart was so distracted, I never once really prayed. I felt how guilty I was, and strove against it, and yet was no better. It is just that I, who have deserted God, should be deserted by Him. Yet, O Lord, in justice remember mercy; when wilt thou return unto my soul?"

He was not left long to go on his way in darkness. The spring of 1810 was a season of peculiar spiritual refreshment, and the journal glows with hope, joy, and love.

"*March* 4, 1810. I long for that happy region where we shall love God without coldness, and serve Him without distraction. I enjoy here some pleasant hours in worshipping Thee, in reading Thy word, and in the company of my friends, especially when talking of that heavenly kingdom; but this does but make me long more to be with them there, where we shall be free from imperfection and interruption. And as to the greater spiritual mercies, even the precious word of God will there lose its value in perfect knowledge: there it will be one eternal sabbath without a body of corruption to disturb it. I shall need no faithful minister there, for I shall be with Jesus himself, my great High Priest. I shall want no earthly temple there, for I shall for ever dwell in the temple of God, and never depart from Him. I shall want no sacraments there, to bring me nearer to God, for I shall ever see Him. My soul longeth for thy salvation! O happy day, happy time, when I shall burst the bands of slavery, corruption, and sin, and break forth into the glorious and perfect liberty of the sons of God!"

"*April* 29, 1810. I have passed many happy hours in the last week, and have enjoyed much of God's presence,

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in my walks, in a ride, and in my prayers. I have been blessed with a good hope, through grace, that all will yet be well with me, and in spite of my enormous and aggravated iniquities, I shall yet be admitted to the inheritance of the saints in light. I have received much comfort from the delightful promises of God in Christ Jesus, and from the assured hope, that my sins are washed away in his blood. I have spent my mornings very delightfully, generally rising at five, and passing above an hour each morning in delightful converse with God, in thanksgiving, confession, petition, and intercession. My heart has been enlarged in thanksgiving, and I would have had the whole earth, and the blessed inhabitants of heaven, to have joined with me in praising God for his mercies in Christ Jesus. In confession, my soul has been humbled to the dust, knowing that my guilt is unparalleled. I have then fled to the blood and to the cross of Christ, and have found peace. I have been enabled to pray, as knowing God is my strength, and that I can do nothing without Christ. I have been enabled to intercede earnestly for benefactors and relations. Why do I write down these things? to boast of them? No; far be that from me; but to the praise of the glory of Thy grace, to shew how mercy abounds to the chief of sinners, to magnify the goodness of my God who hath dealt so bountifully with me, though I deserved nothing but his wrath and destruction.

"Oh! what a pleasant life is a life of faith in Christ Jesus. How pleasant it is to go to a reconciled Father, and to acknowledge His infinite mercies. How pleasant to lie at the foot of the cross, and to hear the gracious words, 'Thy sins are pardoned, thine iniquities are for-

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given.' How pleasant it is to have God for a friend and companion, in my walks, and at my labours, (though in business I lose this much through my own fault,) and to know that He is about my path, and careth for me. How pleasant it is to consider that nothing can hurt me, nothing can injure me, for God is my portion for ever and ever. He feeds, and will feed me: He supports, and will support me. In Him, I become independent of the world. I want not riches, pleasures, or the favour of men: having God I possess all things—yea, unto Thy hands, into Thy unlimited government I surrender myself, and rejoice in Thy salvation.

"Oh! how pleasant it is in this view to look at death. Death will break down the partition-wall which keeps me from my God. Death will admit me into his heavenly presence!

"Through death I shall behold Jesus my Redeemer who died for me. Come life, come death, come poverty, want, or disease; in Jesus Christ all is mine, and I am Christ's, and Christ is God's.

"Who am I, what am I, that God should thus have mercy upon me, that He should not long ago have cut me off in my sins? Why was I not as Herod, as Sapphira, as Judas? Grace, grace and mercy has made the difference. 'He hath mercy on whom He will have mercy.'

"Now what shall I answer to the text of my minister (Mr. Budd.) 'My son, give me thy heart!' O Lord, my heart is fixed—my heart is ready—Lord, I am thine now, I am thine for ever, thine by creation, doubly thine by redemption, by purchase, by gratitude, by love. O let every hour testify how much I am thine, by the ardour of my thanks and my love.

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" 'Rejoice in the Lord, O my soul'—in the Lord thou hast forgiveness and pardon, in the Lord thou hast strength and sanctification.'—'Again, I say rejoice, yet my soul, let it be a rejoicing, consistent with the deepest humiliation; therefore rejoice with trembling.' 'Rejoice in the Lord, putting thy whole trust in Him, and knowing, that without Him thou art as a branch cut off from the vine.'

" *May* 6, 1810. Sometimes I can rejoice in the mount with my Redeemer; sometimes I lie in the valley, dead, barren, and unprofitable, yet I trust I am going onward toward the heavenly Jerusalem, though with many stops, and so slow, that my motion is hardly perceptible. This last week has been much defiled by selfishness, vanity, and impatience;—these sins still obstruct my way, and hinder my course, yet I think I more constantly fly to Christ, and more sincerely rely upon Him for help and strength. I think and hope His Spirit has made me more dead to the world, and more fixed in my judgment to give up all for Him:

" Did ever rebel hope for such things from an earthly king, as I hope for from God? I hope not only for pardon and peace, but for a crown and a kingdom; and I know mine is not a vain hope, for I have the promise of my God for it. Did ever criminal not only hope for pardon, but for an inheritance with the king's son?—this is my hope. Oh, how ought I to love, how ought I to abound in thanksgiving, how ought I to study to please God. To my God and Father, be glory for ever and ever."

Even when a cloud passed over his joys, the humbled chastened spirit in which he prayed for a renewal of the

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light of God's countenance, shewed what advances true holiness had made in his heart.

"*June* 17, 1810. I have in the main in this week been walking in darkness, yet I trust my heart has been in some measure dead to the world; but indeed my heart is a rock, it seems unaffected with all the great things I believe. I continue long in prayer; I pray vehemently; but my heart is unaffected, it does not melt at the sight of my sins, nor at the mercy of God;—formerly these things used to draw many tears. I judge not of my penitence by my tears, but surely, if sincere, it would cause heartfelt sorrow. It is only the broken spirit that God will not despise, and that I do not possess. I prayed before I went to church, that God would meet me in His temple this once; I was earnest that I might pray in spirit and in truth. I went there, but my heart was ever wandering on temporal projects. It was cold and unaffected almost the whole service, and I had few fervent breathings after God; whence was this? God is faithful,—it was to teach me patience, that I must wait upon Him, till He have mercy upon me. I expect to receive the moment I ask; but that is not God's plan. We must continue instant in prayer; then, though He slay me, I will trust in Him. But God might have another object, let me endeavour to trace it. I am proud, vain, puffed up; He would shew me whence I receive every thing, and that He giveth, when, and as He will. To Him be glory, whether He give or deny, to Him be glory for ever. He is just, and I am unjust; He is faithful, and I am unfaithful; to Him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

"O let me press toward the mark, let me remember the time is short; whatsoever my hand findeth to do, let

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me do it with all my might. O my Strength, my Redeemer, my Hope, my Jesus, divine Master, blessed Emanuel; succour, strengthen, support me: I am falling back in the conflict, O fight for me. O triumph over mine enemies, and Thine shall be the praise and the glory. Revive Thy work in my heart. I am dead and unprofitable, O let me live again in Christ, let me receive nourishment, life, and vigour from Him. I am ready to starve, O afford me the bread of life. Father, I ask, I seek, I knock, I would be importunate, my life is at stake; I cannot let Thee go, till Thou bless me. Hear, O hear me, have mercy upon me. O Abba Father, see Thy son, poor, naked, destitute, lacking the bread of life. My soul thirsteth, hungereth after Thee. 'O fill my mouth with fatness, and I will praise Thy name for ever and ever.'"

In September he had again seasons of conflict, but while with the Psalmist, he could say;—'My soul followeth hard after Thee,' with the Psalmist he could also add;—'Thy right hand upholdeth me.'

"*September* 2, 1810. O sin, sin! what ravages sin causes in the earth, what dreadful ravages in my heart. I seem to make no ground, nay, I rather go back. O that I may win Christ and be found in him. Dear Lord, wilt Thou come unto me as a Shepherd, to guide and lead me in Thy ways; as an advocate, to plead for sin and obtain peace and righteousness; as a Saviour, from the guilt, condemnation, and power of sin to give me an interest in thy righteousness; as a Prophet, to teach me thy truth; as a Priest, to make reconciliation and intercession for me; as a King, to rule and govern me by thy Spirit; as a Physician, to heal all my diseases; as a Fountain, to cleanse me from sin. O when wilt Thou

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come unto me? I go to thy house, I find Thee not; I seek in the morning, but Thou art absent, and in the evening,—but Thou comest not. I knock, but it is not opened. Lord, I am dumb before Thee. Thou art righteous and I am wicked. O save my soul, for I put my trust in Thee."

"*September* 23, 1810. I am weak in body, having considerable pain in my chest, but this is rather a mercy, a favour, a kindness; but I am dead, cold, and lifeless in spirit; here is the misery. Well, I am in barrenness, in coldness, in deadness; now is the time, then, when I can find nothing in myself, to rejoice in the Lord. O that is a pleasant thought, His work is perfect, His salvation complete, and we are complete in Him; that is joyful. He died for me. Am I not trusting to Him for salvation? Have I not fled to Him for refuge from the wrath to come? And did ever any flee to Him in vain? Rejoice in the Lord, O my soul, see what He hath purchased for thee."

"*September* 30, 1810. 'Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. Here, O my soul, faith is to be exercised, against hope to believe in hope. God is now, and has been, absent from my soul. I perceive not the comfort of His presence, the joy of His salvation. Well, we walk by faith and not by sight. Faith must see Him present. Though now I see Him not, yet let me rejoice in Him. Does He not freely offer Himself unto me? Do I not gladly receive Him as my God, my all-sufficient portion? If not, whence this longing after God, this distress at His absence, this desire for His presence? Is not God as willing to save me, as I am to be saved? Should I ever have thought of salvation if He had not made me willing in the day of His power?"

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Mr. Bickersteth was in the habit of bringing, not only his spiritual wants, but all his temporal troubles to God in prayer, and his faith was strengthened by many remarkable answers. One circumstance which happened to him early in life, made an impression on him that was never effaced. He more than once repeated the anecdote to his children, telling them how it had taught him the value and efficacy of prayer. It is referred to in his journal, June 3, 1810.

"I do not recollect that I ever asked for temporal mercies, when God did not answer me. In the post-office, where I opened letters, I once lost a letter containing money, and was grievously distressed. I sought the Lord, and promised obedience if He would hear me. That evening, I thought that I would search for it. I did so, and found it the first thing in a large closet, filled more than usual with torn papers. I was much astonished, and blessed God, but did not keep my promises. There have been many similar occasions when God has answered my prayers. I have often been in distress in business, for fear of disgrace for supposed neglects and carelessness, I have prayed to God, and either that had not happened which I feared, or the neglect proved of no consequence. I could enumerate many instances."

The following, while it records another gracious answer to prayer, shows how kind an interest he took in those who laboured in the same office.

"*July* 6, 1810, Blessed be the Lord my God, who hath heard and answered my prayer. One of the clerks from the office had absented himself for a week, at first from ill health, and afterwards from shame at returning. At last he was prevailed on to write to Mr. B., and he

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came back. Mr. B. refused to let him stay; he was in distress on the occasion. I wrote to him to remind him that the hearts of all men were in the hands of God, who disposed and turned them as he pleased, and that if he really wished to return, and would pray God in faith and in Christ's name, I could assure him of a reception, or of finding a better place. I heard, afterwards, Mr. B. had said he would submit to any inconvenience sooner than receive him back. The clerk wrote to Mr. B. again with humility. I sought the Lord in prayer, and he heard me; when I went in to Mr. B. this morning, he told me the clerk might return. I thank Thee, O Father, for this."

One or two extracts will show how zealously he watched his conduct towards his companions; striving to stir himself up to seek their salvation.

"I must strive to banish levity in my conversation, and especially with worldly characters. Let me be as cheerful as possible; but let it be a sober cheerfulness, from which I could in a moment retire to serious conversation and prayer. I am very subject to this levity of behaviour; but this is not a world to trifle in. Whilst we are beating about in the storm, and uncertain of reaching the shore, is this a time for levity? Whilst we are daily sinning against God, and live in a sinful world, is this a time for folly? One would think the carelessness and indifference of my companions, ought rather to make me tremble and fear for them, and earnestly and anxiously seek their eternal good....."

"I am very selfish; I seek not the good of others with that enlarged charity Christianity requires: thus I am impatient under interruptions of my study and quiet,

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though called to be useful to others. I am ready to give a hasty answer to questions put to me when I am engaged: where is meekness and gentleness and forbearance in this? I hope the Spirit of my God has done something for me here; but O how backward I am to self-denial."

"I trust there is some alteration for the better among my companions; if there be, it is thy work, O my God. May Thy grace begin, may Thy grace carry on, a good work, not only amongst my companions, kindred, acquaintance, friends, and countrymen, but through the whole world, for Christ's sake. O that it might please God to open the way for me to become his minister! I consider it of little importance what becomes of me here, so that I might be the means of spreading the glad tidings of great joy, throughout the world if possible. In the ministry, I should have greater opportunities for this. I want not riches, honours, or pleasures: I want to be wise to win souls. I want to proclaim the joyful sound, if it be the will of my God. Yet in this I would say with the utmost sincerity and resignation, Thy will, not mine, be done."

The desire expressed in the above extract, which had so important an influence on his whole future course, was one which had been long on his mind. It was now growing too strong to be entirely set aside. Serious difficulties, however, stood in the way of its accomplishment. No opening appeared, either for relinquishing his present position, or for entering the ministry. He knew that his parents had gone through much perplexity, and incurred some expense in fixing him where he now was; he could not therefore appeal to them, as he was wont, for counsel;

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for he did not wish to harass them, until the path of duty was more clear to his own mind. Under these circumstances he determined to seek advice from his dearest friend and most faithful counsellor, his brother John, to whom he addressed the following letter.

"Do not be surprised at the subject of this letter; it comes suddenly upon you, but it has very long been in my thoughts. I have long had desires not to continue in my profession, when my time with Mr. Bleasdale is expired, from a strong wish to enter the Church. I have endeavoured to consider it fully, and it is the only point, I believe, on which I have not opened my heart to you and my parents. I now wish to consult you upon it; for if there are no sound reasons on Christian grounds against it, I could conscientiously give up all my leisure time, which is considerable, to the sole study of Divinity. I have indeed latterly done this, but my mind is not comfortable in doing it, till I am quite satisfied I shall change my course in life. I think the best way of putting you in possession of the exact state of my thoughts, will be to send you almost a verbatim copy of what I wrote a short time since, when I wished fully to consider it for my own decision. I will only say further, that the objections seemed to vanish the moment I considered them. I found some difficulty in considering it as a matter of sober reflection, yet I hope I have considered it candidly, as an indifferent person might. Indeed I have felt so ardent about it, as hardly to bear the thoughts of a disappointment; though if I saw it the will of God, I doubt not, by his grace, I could relinquish it. But I confess to you, that if the offer was made me of the largest fortune in England, or to be the minister of

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the poorest parish, I should, I think, without hesitation, choose the latter."

The fragmentary style of the paper here referred to, shows that it was only written for the purpose of giving more distinctness to his own thoughts; but it so fully describes his innermost feelings, that no better view can be given of the motives which eventually led him to enter the Christian ministry.

THOUGHTS UPON MY DESIRE TO ENTER THE MINISTRY.

"I have often, in the course of my life, wished to be in the Church as a minister, thinking it a most divine life to be ever occupied in the immediate service of God. For more than the last month, these thoughts have been so strong upon my mind, my desires have been so ardent for this, and it has entered so much into my prayers, that I think it necessary and proper to give the matter a very serious and full consideration.

"O Father, I look up to Thee for wisdom. I ask direction and guidance of Thee. I beseech Thee to enable me to discern thy will; let me not be led aside by pride, self-conceit, or vanity; let me not be influenced by fickleness of disposition, austerity, or discontent at Thy appointments, but O grant unto me a desire to know and do Thy will, and to live entirely to Thy glory, through Jesus Christ.

"On the first view of the matter, many and great objections seem to arise. I have once changed my situation in life. I am now in a situation, in which I might live profitably and comfortably, and do good. I am bound for a certain number of years—my parents might object to it—my voice is against it. Is it not a mere desire of

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change? Do I see that God has opened a way for me to leave my present situation? Consider the awful responsibility, and my inadequate powers—the time already lost—the uncertainty of provision, and the expense of preparation.

"I do not at all intend to consider it in a mere worldly point of view, or there might be arguments against it from the far inferior prospect of temporal comfort and riches in the Church, than in my present situation; but this does not enter into my thoughts, and there is doubtless some uncertainty even in my present prospects.

"Well, then, what motives influence me against all those objections? I think I can say, an earnest desire to win souls unto God, from a view of the present deplorable state of the world. An earnest desire to spend myself and be spent for Christ, founded, as I trust, on a sense of the immense value of a single soul. It is the command of Christ, that we pray the Lord to send labourers into his vineyard, for truly the harvest is plenteous, and the labourers few; and if he has given me a desire to be a labourer, ought I to check it? St. Paul says, 'This is a true saying, he that desires the office of a bishop,' (and by parity of reasoning, that of a pastor, if by bishop is not meant pastor,) 'desires a good work;' and I know what promises there are to those that convert a soul from the error of his ways.

"I would then seriously and deliberately weigh the objections, giving them a full consideration.

"*I have changed once*, and by that change put my parents to a considerable expense. I changed then deliberately; my brothers also have changed; we shall be

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called fickle and unsteady, never pursuing anything stedfastly.

"I recollect, when I made this change, I was not eager about entering into the law, as I doubt not my letters to my parents would prove.

"Because I changed once on deliberation, am I not to change again if it be for the better? I think it right to consider what others would think; but I am not so anxious to satisfy them, as to satisfy my own mind. This objection, then, seems to have no weight. As to worldly riches, I have no wish at all to gather them, let who will take them; it would not increase my happiness one jot, to have all the money in the kingdom.

"*I am now in a situation in which I might live profitably, and do much good.* I certainly think I ought not to change, but for strong reasons. There is no honest situation, in which a man may not glorify God, and do good; and it seems a mere temptation to think I could do more in another, and thus to neglect my own. If I did neglect my own, I should think so; but these thoughts only make me more diligent, in striving to benefit the souls of my companions, and to do good in my present sphere; seeing that, if I improve the talents God now gives, He may be pleased to give me more. As to my present business, there certainly are very strong objections to it, as I have found. I can hardly conceive any in which there are stronger temptations. It is a system of hostility. Christianity says; 'Give all you can,'—the law in every one of its branches, says, 'Get all you can.' If I act up to Christian principles, I think my principles are likely to keep me poor; I shall offend worldly men, for I will never gratify their worldly passions; and it is chiefly by worldly

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men that attornies are supported. There is another great evil which I have found—the multitude of affidavits that are necessary, and the short time there is for preparing them. I sometimes shudder to think how often I have been carelessly called upon to say, 'So help me God!' to an affidavit,—obliged to be drawn in haste, and sworn immediately.

"*I am bound for a certain number of years*;—this is a decisive objection to my entering the Church at present, but not hereafter. I think if the plan is carried into execution, it ought to be mentioned to my master, he might possibly be inclined to give part of this time up—if he were not, I must serve him to the end of my time; but however that may be, I will never be guilty of ingratitude for the many kindnesses I have received from him. I cannot enter the Church by injustice; but, at any rate, I might be giving my leisure time to studies proper for this work.

"*My parents might object to it*, or dislike it, if they did not object to it;—if so, ought I to think of it? I cannot tell the mind of my parents, till I have laid the matter before them. I am certain they rather desire to see me happy, than great, or rich. I am certain they wish my happiness. I am certain they would be content to make some sacrifices for this. This ought to be a strong reason against unnecessary change, but it gives me a confidence that if I see the reasons to be strong, they also will. In my present situation, I ought not to say, I cannot be happy; for I believe it might be made a lawful employment; but it is very contrary to my inclinations; it is irksome and tedious; my heart is never in it. In another point of view, if through this change I may become instrumental

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in saving one soul more, my parents will partake of the blessing,—they will have a higher glory, for they were the instruments by which I received a knowledge of Christianity—my very love to them is an argument for the change.

"*My voice is against it.* This is a strong objection, but the chief work of a minister is not in the pulpit;—if I thought so, I should never desire to enter the Church;—it is to be much in prayer, in visiting the sick, and the healthy, in exhorting and rebuking with all diligence. O this is a noble employment. As to my voice, I believe much might be done, by great care and labour, as Demosthenes overcame a natural defect in this way.

"*Is it not a mere desire of change?* I think not;—I have often in the course of my life wished to enter the ministry, and always have been most desirous of it, when my thoughts of religion have been deepest. A sense of my own insufficiency, and I believe, at one time, a sense of the extreme uncertainty of my life, prevented my thinking further about it. I do not see the latter so strongly now, as my health is now, through the blessing of God, very good. It is not a mere desire of change, because there is no other employment whatever that I wish to engage in, except the ministry.

"*Do I see that God has opened a way?* This is a very important question, and requires the deepest consideration—but how can I expect that God will open a way, unless I make my views and wishes known? He ever works by means, and if we want any Christian grace, or temporal benefit, we must use all the means in our power, in dependence upon His blessing. But for the work of the ministry, I believe, there is requisite a call from God—a motion of his Holy Spirit; this is what demands my

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strictest attention and investigation. Now this desire of mine to enter the Church is either from Satan, from my own corrupt heart, or from God. If it were from Satan, it would be with a view to gratify my pride, either by becoming great, or powerful, or rich:—now I think none of these motives have the least influence. I should be content to live on bread and water, in the poorest parish in England, so that I might spend all my time in the work of religion. I want not the favour of the world, I want the salvation of the world. I should be content to be despised by the whole world, so that I might be instrumental in saving many souls, live with Christ, and enjoy the light of His countenance. If a corrupt heart influenced me, it would be from a love of ease, and of riches; but I am far more likely to enjoy ease and riches in the situation in which I now am. I give up ease and pleasure. How can this desire be from any thing else than God? no worldly or secular motives (after the best search I can make) seem to influence me, but 'the heart is deceitful, and desperately wicked, who can know it?' Lord, thou knowest it, discover to me the bottom of my heart.

"*Consider the awful responsibility*—the blood of a whole parish upon my soul. O let me count the cost, before I undertake it. I may pass through life safely, and reach heaven as I am, and still, after preaching to others, I may become a castaway. I would give this thought its full weight. But who is it that must enable me to be faithful? Do I trust in myself? O no; I know in whom I have trusted, the most faithful ministers have not been faithful through their own strength or power, but God is able to make me faithful.

"*My inadequate powers*,—to this I must give the same

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answer. I think, whatever labour would enable me to acquire, a sincere desire for the salvation of others would induce me to give all the labour I could, to acquire. Let me recollect that the chief things requisite are, the teaching of the Holy Spirit, and a personal knowledge of the great truths I would preach.

"*The time already lost.* I do not think it has been lost. I have gained a knowledge of the immense corruption of the Christian world, which may be very useful in the ministry. My Master did not enter his ministry till he was thirty, I do not think I should be too old at forty.

"*The expense of preparation*; this is another objection. I would willingly part with all I have, to enable me to prepare for this; for I am very certain, that with the many disadvantages I have, I ought to have every advantage.

"*The uncertainty of provision*:—if the call from God be clear, this is no uncertainty at all. I am quite confident of provision. Indeed, I should well be content to go as a Missionary to the heathen, and to preach the glad tidings of salvation in distant lands, were no prospect of usefulness opened at home.

"And now let me count the cost, as far as regards the world, that I prove not like a foolish builder.

"*I must be content to be esteemed foolish by all my worldly acquaintance*;—they will not see the force of the motives which influence me; they will call me, perhaps, an enthusiast, or, at any rate, fickle, and changeable. I thank my God, I am not to be judged by my fellow-creatures. He knows my heart, and though it be very corrupt, and I am a great sinner, yet, I trust, He has given me a desire to live above the world, and to His glory.

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"*I must be content to live in poverty and want.* Money provides many comforts; the want of it brings many distresses. I have never been in this case yet,—I know not how unpleasant it might be. Indeed, if I know my heart, I want nothing but daily food. I can trust God for that, and everything else. Man's life consists not in the abundance of good things which he possesses—a state of riches has more danger than a state of poverty.

"*I may have to go through many troubles in a parish;* many things requiring much patience. I may meet with much opposition;—can I overcome it by meekness and love? In every situation I must have troubles, if I am faithful, and there is only a choice of difficulties, but if a minister is faithful, the reward is immense.

"*Much more strictness will be required of me, as a minister, than as a private man.* But that is what I want;—as many motives to holiness as I can get.

"And now let me consider the arguments to set against these. The delightful employment—to be ever occupied in getting good to my own soul, or in doing good to others. Indeed, it is the work of angels, it seems a heaven upon earth. I know how pleasantly my time passes in religious pursuits—to be able to give all my time to that, surely, if God blesses it with His presence, this is a most delightful employment.

"What is this life about which I have sometimes been so anxious? It is a vapour, a dream, a shadow. Look at the six thousand years which have passed since this world was created; look at the eternity, the immeasurable period that is to succeed. Adam lived a long time,—he is dead. Methuselah lived nearly a thousand years,—he is dead; their lives past away as a tale that is told, but their works

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follow them. I conclude then from this, that it is a matter of almost perfect indifference, what toils and troubles I go through here, so that I may live entirely to the glory of Him who has bought me with a price—so that I may be wise to win many souls to God. I know that the degree of glory hereafter is proportioned to our devotedness to God; to obtain a higher degree of glory is a noble ambition; that is an object worthy of pursuit. I know that "they that be wise, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that *turn many to righteousness*, as the stars for ever and ever."

"Nothing in the world, I conceive, is comparable to an increase of glory hereafter; but by sacrificing the world I may increase my glory hereafter. Lord, thou canst enable me to do this. I put my trust in Thee; through faith in Thee I hope to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil.

"I know of many ministers now in the Church, who do not indeed preach the truth—it seems harsh, it seems judging men to say so, but they are indeed false teachers. Christianity opens, it does not blind my eyes; it directs me not to believe every spirit, but to try the spirits, as he that preacheth not Christ come in the flesh, is not of God. I hear of many entering from worldly motives; to gain riches, or ease, or power; does it not become me, who, as far as I can judge, think I am influenced solely by other motives, to endeavour to become a labourer in the vineyard of the Lord? I am indeed a great and a miserable sinner, who have no hope at all, but in the immense and immeasurable mercy of God. I would rank myself below publicans and harlots, for they may not have been so guilty in the sight of God,—that God who

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knows the heart's motives, as I, who have sinned presumptuously, knowingly, and wilfully; but still I think the mercy and long-suffering of God has brought me to repentance. I humbly hope His Spirit has produced a change in my soul, and that I am not what I was;—to Him be the glory. I trust that He has brought me to see that the Gospel is glad tidings of great joy, and having tasted His mercy, I would be instrumental in imparting it to others. Seeing the value of my own soul, and what God has done for me, I would gladly do what I can for others. It is of little importance what becomes of me here, so that I may be the means of spreading the gospel, if possible, throughout the world. I should have greater opportunities for this in the ministry. I want not riches, honour, or pleasure: I want to proclaim the joyful sound of salvation, if it be the will and pleasure of God.

"The times are very remarkable; God is doing great things, great changes are taking place in the political world. I trust also great changes are taking place in the Christian world—the spirit of true religion seems reviving in an extraordinary manner—the fields are white for the harvest: this then, I think, is a time for making great sacrifices—a time when we should give ourselves up, without reserve, unto God: the times seem coming, when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of Christ. O that I might be instrumental in this great work. The true light hath shined in the world. It just discovers the black darkness, the great falling away that there has been from Christian principles and practice,—that men have been lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God; much, much is yet to be done; may God indeed send labourers fully fitted for this great work!

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"But some other objections strike me. O how did the holy men of old fear to undertake this great work! What a high sense they had of it—to be an ambassador of Christ, seemed a thing requiring the highest perfection. Augustine and Ambrose thought themselves unequal to it, and shall guilty, foolish I, think of it—do I want any greater proof of my pride and vanity than this? I know not what to say to this. I think my eyes are open to see that the whole world lieth in wickedness, and that a sincere, hearty Christian, is a very rare thing. I see myself utterly unworthy the name. I think I feel an earnest desire to bear witness to the truth, to preach the glad tidings of salvation to a world sunk in sin. I know that he who desires the office of a pastor, desires a good work; and though my powers and abilities be vastly inadequate to this great work, yet I know that the natural powers of the greatest men are also inadequate. My strength is in the Lord, and from Him I would look for a supply of all that is wanting in my wretched self. If it be His will that I enter, He can give me all necessary qualifications.

"What then is the result of my thoughts? I endeavoured to sit down indifferent, and to judge without partiality. As far as I can judge, my reason, enlightened by Scripture and the Spirit of God, approves of the work I design, but he that trusteth his own heart is a fool; lean not unto thine own understanding. I will advise with a Christian, and if his arguments convince me I am wrong, I will give up the point; and I pray God to keep my heart open to conviction, and to give me no desire, but that His will may be done in me, by me, and through me, for Christ's sake. Amen."

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To this letter he received an answer from his brother, fully sympathizing in his feelings, but pointing out the necessity of waiting till the path was opened by God himself. This sympathy was most cheering to him. "My dearest brother," he writes in answer, "I thank you for your friendly letter, and I bless God our Father that I have such a brother to consult. Hard as my heart is, I could not read it without tears, especially in that part which said, Go, preach the gospel." He then alludes to circumstances which confirmed his brother's opinion as to the necessity of waiting, and adds, "I must say on the threshold of this letter, I entirely agree with you, that it appears the course of duty to wait further for the leadings of Providence, till God opens a door of entrance more visibly; knowing that, if it please Him, He can accomplish it, and that the most likely way of ascertaining His will as to fresh talents, is to be faithful in the use of those I have. I think my chief and paramount desire is, that His will may be done—that His name may be glorified —that sinners may be converted to Him; but I need the caution, (and I beg your prayer in it,) 'Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall. We stand by faith.'

"I must confess that, after an attentive consideration, I do not feel the force of your argument, of the intended change reflecting discredit on my religious principles. If it were a mere change from one profession to another, it might indeed; but a Christian minister's duty is not a profession; he is called of God, he is not sent of men; he is an ambassador of Christ; he declares the mysteries of the gospel. Only consider, if the apostles or even the missionaries had been actuated by this principle, where

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would Christianity now have been? I could not change with any view of gain. I know, my dear brother, there are such things as offences, upon which an awful woe is denounced, but this is against those who hinder men from embracing Christianity, not against those who seek to preach the glad tidings, by every means God has given them. Worldly men have continually told me, 'Why do you not enter the Church? if I had a living, I would give it you.' This I have heard continually; it does not therefore appear that they see it objectionable. And now as to the love of change; I have, my brother, I confess, some doubts whether there be not something of this spirit; I have endeavoured to search it out, but I cannot clearly ascertain it. Knowing I am naturally fickle and changeable, I have searched with the more care; but I really think the first motive influencing this desire of change was a view to give up all my time and talents to God. I confess the heart is very deceitful; yet I think God will not let us be greatly deceived, where we search with prayer.

"You say, 'God has blessed, and is blessing you in your present situation;' indeed, my brother, he has, and is blessing me. I find and feel Him to be a most merciful Father. I see myself His child by adoption, by the blood of his Son, and the work of his Spirit. Therefore, because He has blessed me, shall I not give up all to Him? shall I not entirely dedicate myself to His service? This is what I should like.

"Mr. W.'s situation was different: he had a family to think of. I am a solitary individual, and therefore might with less scruple leave my situation.

"I am sensible we must abstain from all appearance

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of evil, and therefore agree entirely as to waiting at present, and an attentive discharge of the duties of my present situation. Yet this, I think, need not entirely preclude me from hoping to be employed by God as a minister of his Gospel.

"You know, my brother, that many excellent ministers, at whose feet I should be glad to sit, (as Newton, M. Henry, Stonehouse,) have left their former employments, and become useful ministers in the Church of Christ. God has blessed their zeal with much fruit; and though I have no hope of being as useful as they, yet I think I desire to love Christ as much as they loved him, and to spread the knowledge of his love as much as they did.

"I confess, my dear John, I have prayed without any reserve, except if it pleased my heavenly Father, that he would open a way by which I might become a minister of his Gospel, to declare the unsearchable riches of Christ. I felt myself justified in this from 1 Tim. iii. 1: it surely cannot be improper to pray for a good work. I know that God's promises, when we pray in faith for their fulfilment, will all be fulfilled. I know also we have a right to pray in faith for the fulfilment of His commands, which are all so many promises; for He has said, "I will write my laws in their hearts, and incline them to do them."

"I see now plainly in this matter, that it must be the work of God, if it is accomplished. I know, if it be not accomplished, it will be because it will be most for His glory; and then indeed, if His glory be advanced, my prayers will be fully answered. They will indeed be answered, if I am assembled with those who are made unto our God kings and priests; and I should think them most fully answered, if, by any means, by my life or by my

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death, I might be brought to a knowledge of the truth, and become a minister of God; as I am persuaded he might be a great instrument of spreading the truth which once he opposed. I have often prayed for temporal blessings, and do not recollect an instance where my prayers have not been answered in the very things desired. In many perplexities and anxieties in business, I have looked up to God in faith and prayer, and all has gone on pleasantly and well. This gives me confidence in my Father, that He watches over me for good. It does not appear to me that the objections to my becoming a missionary are so strong as those against my entering the Church. I have had desires for this; but it is so arduous a task, so noble an employment, so peculiarly awful a situation, that I should long count the cost before I should decide on it. A missionary ought indeed to be strong in the Lord. I hope, my dear brother, that the missionaries have your daily prayers, that God will be with them, and bless them, giving them faith and utterance to speak boldly. Who can tell what the united prayers of Christians may do in this respect? The God we pray to, sees them in all their dangers, and can mightily deliver them. When I look at the different subjects of prayer, I think I could pray all day; but, alas! when I come to pray, I find that God must give the spirit of prayer; else, however great our wants, our mercies, or the necessities of others, we cannot worship in spirit and in truth."

Mr. Bickersteth's letter was shown by his brother to Mr. L., a mutual friend, who answered it very fully. Mr. L. set before him the extreme difficulty of coming to a right conclusion as to the path of duty, where the mind was so strongly biassed on any subject, as his was in

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favour of entering the ministry: he pointed out to him that the desire of winning souls to Christ, since it must be common to all Christians, was not of itself sufficient proof that he was called to the work, and reminded him that he might labour for the salvation of men in his present sphere, and in so doing, would probably have more to suffer for Christ's sake; since a religious lawyer was rare, while, in a clergyman, religion was expected. The real question was, whether it were God's will that he should serve Him in his present situation, however distasteful, or in the higher work of the ministry; this he assured him would be made clear, in the course of God's providence, by the continuance or the removal of the difficulties by which his way was now closed. For the present, he exhorted him to wait for clearer indication of God's will, not allowing his mind to be at all unhinged, or in a state of uncertainty, but going straightforward in his usual course. The complete agreement of judgment between his brother and friend strengthened his own conviction, as to the line of conduct to which he was now called; he therefore at once resumed his suspended legal studies. "It is our highest happiness," he wrote to Mr. L., "to have our will entirely conformed to the Divine will, to submit our will to His, and to say without reserve, 'Thy will be done.' This is a hard lesson to a corrupt nature, and especially in some trying cases; but, like every other Christian grace, it may be effectually learned at the foot of the cross, through the teachings of the Spirit, and when we are enabled to give up our own will to the Divine,—as I doubt not you must have experienced,—we feel a peace that the world neither gives, nor can take away."

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The grace he sought was not withheld from him; he was enabled to wait patiently for five years, till the Lord granted him the desires of his heart, and made the way so plain before him, that he was clear from every charge of impatience or love of change, when he did at length assume the office of a minister. Nor was the time of waiting lost. A course of self-denying labour, and many peculiarly painful conflicts with the evil of the world, were preparing him for the arduous work of the ministry. Fighting in the ranks, he was trained to be a Captain in the army of the Lord.

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CHAPTER VI.

HOME CORRESPONDENCE.

A. D. 1810.

The love of souls, which led Mr. Bickersteth to desire to enter the ministry, was too deep and genuine to expend itself in fruitless longings for a position denied to him by the providence of God; it was manifested by the diligent improvement of every means of doing good, then within his reach. Duty and affection alike led him to desire, first, to be made a blessing to his own family. The seasons of personal intercourse were so few and limited, that it was by correspondence chiefly that he hoped to influence them. To this, therefore, he devoted all his powers. His letters, though often written after a harassing day's business, were carefully studied, and chiefly filled with subjects of everlasting import. His zeal indeed in this matter went beyond his judgment, and he ran a risk of offending, where he wished most to conciliate. "A letter from Edward,"—his father would say,—"put it by; it will do to read on Sunday." To his mother's admonitions on this head he replied meekly, "You are very right in what you say about my letters, and I have, to say the least, been unwise. O do always tell me of any thing you see in me which may not be exactly as you could

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wish; recollect I have no one else who will." It was not, however, in vain that he expended so much thought on these letters. Some years after, his sister wrote to him; "I am at present deriving so much pleasure from the re-perusal of some of your old letters addressed to my parents, that the very least I can do, is to tell you of the real comfort I experience from them. I well remember, at the time they arrived, thinking them dull and stupid; but I trust it will prove 'bread cast upon the waters, which shall be found after many days.'"

There is a remarkable resemblance between the tone of Mr. Bickersteth's private diary and that of his letters; when the diary tells of declension and darkness, the letters are less spiritual in their character. This was very much the case in the year 1809, while the letters of 1810 are equally marked by ardent spirituality. Some extracts will be given from those written to his parents in that year.

May 18, 1810.

I hope my sisters will find their time pass pleasantly at C——n. As my father says, "if it passes usefully, it will certainly pass pleasantly." If they adorn their Christian profession by the humility, meekness, love, and self-denial of the Christian temper, by studying the good of others, and being anxious to oblige them in all matters not inconsistent with their duty, they cannot but be useful. Their example will be more powerful than any other means they can use, and will give irresistible weight to every thing they may say in recommendation of religion. I am afraid they will not have family prayer at C——n; if they do not find it, possibly they may be the means of introducing it.

I tell you, because I think you will be pleased to hear it, that I was never in better health in my life. I attribute this partly to my

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getting up early. I have got an alarum clock, which wakens me at five every morning ; and as my bed-room is not near any one's else, it does not disturb others. I jump up, and enjoy three very pleasant hours in my room; but though I at present enjoy such good health, I would ever remember that in the midst of life we are in death. I have had several striking instances of this lately.

I do not forget this is my mother's birth-day, and I write with more pleasure to her on that account. How then shall I testify my love?—by drinking bumpers of wine, or by making noble presents?—the first I will not, and the second I cannot. These are not the ways in which my mother is anxious I should show my love. No, I desire to consider every thing with an eye to God. I would thank Him who has so long spared a life so valuable to us all. I would implore Him that He may long, very long continue it; that He would daily impart more and more of His Holy Spirit, and fill her who is so dear to us, with all joy and peace in believing; and finally, in His own time, bring her to that bliss which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived;" and I would sum up all in the name of Him, who has promised to give us whatever we ask in His name. In this I think I shall answer the desires of my mother, and prove myself her dutiful and affectionate son,

E. BICKERSTETH.

The years Mr. Bickersteth spent during his youth in London were a time of much political excitement, but he was too earnestly occupied with his daily duties, to meddle with any thing which seemed to him to lie beyond his province. In his later years, his interest was lively in any public matter where truth and righteousness were at stake; but even to the end of his life, he was indifferent to questions of mere party politics; and though a conservative in principle, would sometimes playfully ward off the question, whether he was a whig or a tory, by

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saying, "I am a Christian." His principles, as a young man, on the subject of politics, are given in the following letter to his mother.

Hatton Court, June, 1810.

MY DEAREST PARENTS,

My mother says my letters give her pleasure; can I then have a higher pleasure than to write? This is the sole reason of my writing at present. I have been looking for a letter several days past, or I would have written before.

I interfere very little with politics. If I were in Parliament, or in an official situation, I might think it a duty to attend to them; but as I can form no competent judgment about them, it would be very absurd in me to pretend to decide any of the questions that are agitated. I find however, the use of my Bible here. It is there asked, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word;" and there I find abundant directions for my conduct. The word of God says, "Be subject to principalities and powers, speak evil of no man, be no brawlers, nor contentious; whosoever resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God. Resist not evil, but if a man smite thee on one cheek turn the other." I know these principles would almost produce passive obedience in every case, except where our duty to God was concerned, for there we ought to obey God rather than man—but I know also that the kingdom of Christ is not of this world, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of heaven. I know how contrary these, and many other principles in the Bible, are to the general maxims of the world; but I profess to receive the Bible as a revelation from God; and therefore, whatever is plainly declared there, it is my stedfast resolution, through divine grace, to obey and follow. I shall not be judged by the world, but by the Sacred Scriptures, and it shall be my aim, through grace, to become a faithful follower of Christ, whatever may be my position or lot in the world.

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I thought you would like to see my sentiments on this subject, as it is one which, some time past, a good deal engaged my thoughts, and the above appears to me the only course of conduct a private Christian can pursue in these matters. I have enough to attend to in learning my own profession, and my duty to God, without other subjects.

I am always affectionately and dutifully yours,

E. BICKERSTETH.

June 15, 1810.

MY DEAREST PARENTS,

I am glad to hear my sisters are come home, and should be glad to have some account of their journey. I will use only one argument for their writing, and that seriously. I trust they pray for me; I certainly do for them, but how can I know what to pray for, unless I know something of the state of their hearts, or of their occupations? I am convinced we obtain our greatest mercies, and every blessing, through prayer; they are not blessings or mercies if they do not come by prayer, as good health is often the greatest curse to a man whose heart is fixed on the world. We may obtain every thing by prayer, if we pray in faith, and ask not amiss,—if we pray constantly, and wait patiently. Have you not found it so, my dear parents? I am sure I have. I could mention some remarkable instances, in which my prayers have been answered, and I doubt not that why I am at all brought to a sense of religion now, is in answer to my mother's, and my own prayers. O what a blessing did my mother give me, when she first taught me to pray! Can a life of love and gratitude repay it? O no; I am convinced I shall be her debtor for ever. Let us then continue constant in prayer. God "giveth liberally," and it is delightfully added, "upbraideth not." If we ask a superior for some great thing, he will tell us we do not deserve it; if we have offended him, he will be sure to mention it, even when he gives us what we ask. It is not so with God, He giveth and upbraideth not. Let us enlarge then

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our expectations from Him; let us open our mouth wide, as the Scriptures say, and He will fill it.

Whatever a barrister may do, I think an attorney ought not to defend a bad cause. I would never undertake a cause to gratify the passions or the knavery of my best client; and I hope if I have ever to act as an attorney, I shall have the courage and honesty to act so for my best friend. . . .

I heard, with Mr. Wilson, a most excellent sermon last Thursday from Dr. Buchanan, for the benefit of the Missionary Society. I will send a Report of this Society, with Doddridge's Exposition, and perhaps when my father has read it, he can spare a guinea for it. With love to all around you, in great haste, but still

Your affectionate and dutiful son,

E. BICKERSTETH.

On some occasions he could use more playful arguments to obtain a letter from his sisters.

Hatton Court, April 18, 1810.

MY DEAREST CHARLOTTE,

I have an opportunity of writing by a frank, and saving you 11d. Out of tender compassion then to your finances, I take up my pen, to answer "not criticise," your last. I may however go so far, and pluck up courage to tell you, that, if you will not write, I will even follow your example, the advantages of which will be very many to me. I shall, in the first place, gain a vast deal of time. I lose time in looking out for letters from you, in reading them, and still more in answering them. Now, you must know, time and money mean the same thing to a man of business. I shall, in the next place, be free from all anxiety and suspense about your not writing. I shall save ink, pens, paper, &c. If either of us should happen to die, we shall not feel each other's loss so much. In short, I might fill a letter shewing the advantages of not writing, but I leave it to your ingenuity to find out the remainder, and

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shall have no objection to have an account of them as soon as you please.

I am afraid you will think this letter smells of rebellion. I must let you know then, I have been among the rioters, and had the honour of just escaping some bullets. I was going last Monday week into Fenchurch Street, and met a regiment of dragoons returning from the Tower, where they had lodged a certain dangerous knight.* I had hardly got into the house I was going to, before I heard a pistol go off, this was succeeded by at least twenty more. I was in no very comfortable situation; however in a little time all was quiet, but I was shocked to hear that one man was killed, and grateful that I had escaped. The town has been quiet since.

I think you are right in your sentiments on emulation. I am not aware that any thing I said contradicted what you have written; but you know how customary it is to make emulation the grand moving and exciting principle in schools; for, to corrupt nature, it is of all others the most effectual and animating, yet of all others the most dangerous, as laying such a foundation for pride, as it is difficult ever afterwards to eradicate, and perhaps there is no sin so common to us all, and yet so ruinous, as pride. It is the sin which, of all others, most assimilates us to the father of lies, and I think is one of the last that the Christian overcomes.

I had the pleasure of hearing two interesting sermons from Mr. Fancourt, on two successive Fridays, on the text "Christ is all, and in all." He divided the subject in this way, Christ is all to the believer, and in all believers. I was much struck with one part, when he said something to this effect, "Blot the sun out of the material world, and all is thick gloom, chilling damps, and black darkness. Blot the sun out of the Christian world, and all is equally gloomy, cold, and dark; fear and despair occupy the places of love and joy; there is no hope, no comfort. Blot this sun also out of the heavenly world, and the golden harps would lose their sweetest notes, and be laid aside; heaven would cease to be

* Sir F. Burdett.

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heaven, if Christ were not there." I think his observations were equally good and affecting.

Believe me, dearest sister,

Heartily and affectionately yours,

E. BICKERSTETH.

July 18, 1810.

MY DEAREST FATHER,

—— R—— is certainly very pleasing and amiable in his manners, in which I would endeavour to copy him. Those little things often make a great impression, and enable us to do more good to others, which indeed ought to be the great object kept continually in view. How perfect is the rule of Christian politeness. "Be ye kindly affectioned one towards another, in honor preferring one another." We must, as Paul did, become in matters of indifference, "all things to all men;" but it must be with this express view, that we may gain them to a knowledge of the truth, being "wise as serpents, but harmless as doves."

There are a variety of apparent contradictions in a Christian character. He is sorrowful under a sense of sin, but always rejoicing in the favour of God, and in the hopes of glory. He has nothing, has no love for the world, and yet possesses all things, having the regard and love of that God who giveth all things. He renounces all dependence on his best works for justification before God, and yet no one is so thoroughly holy, not only in his words and actions, but in his thoughts; he renounces this world, and lives a life of self-denial, and yet in reality his is the only life of pleasure—his ways are ways of pleasantness, and all his paths are peace. He lives in a continual conflict, and yet he alone enjoys that "peace of mind which passeth all understanding." No one is so sincere a friend to the world; yet he knows "the friendship of the world is enmity against God;" he will endure the flames rather than give up one truth, and yet he is mild, gentle, "easy to be entreated, full of mercy and of good fruits," he blesses his enemies,

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and he does good to those who injure him. I might enumerate many more things, apparently contradictory. O may we, my dearest parents, be enabled to come up to this noble character. . . .

Believe me ever your affectionate son,

E. BICKERSTETH.

Mr. Bickersteth found such peace and joy in the clearer views of gospel truth he had himself received, that he was very anxious his mother should share with him the comfort they afforded. He knew that she feared God, but he longed to see her able also to confide and rejoice in him. With this view he endeavoured in his letters to set fully before her the freeness and fulness of Christ's pardoning love.

August 6, 1810.

MY DEAREST MOTHER,

It was no small pleasure to find that Doddridge was so acceptable to one I hold so dear. But, O my mother, what returns can I ever make to you, (and above all, to that God who gave me such parents), for all the kindness you have bestowed upon me, for all the trouble you have had with me! When I see what trouble little children give their parents, it naturally occurs how much I am indebted to mine. This leads me up to nobler thoughts; I cannot conceive that my parents can have one unkind wish towards me. O my mother, let us look at our heavenly Father! He is a Parent who has always thoughts of love towards us; can we doubt it? Why? because we have sinned against him? no, that case the Apostle meets, "God hath commended his love to us, in that while we were enemies, Christ died for us." Though we have often provoked our earthly parents, yet still they love us; will not God then much more love us? But is it not somewhat presumptuous to call God, Father, and then to call ourselves sons of God? O no, this is what our Lord himself hath taught us to do—bidding

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us call God, our Father. O let us admire the love of God. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God; now are we the sons of God." (1 John iii. 1.) I believe, my dear mother, the sin of all Christians is a want of faith in God; they are afraid to believe the glorious things God has promised in His word; but faith is the substance of things hoped for, it realizes the promises of God, it lives upon them, it embraces them, and we are filled with all "joy and peace, *in believing*," you see, not in working. If we wish to have peace and joy in religion, it must be by believing, by looking at Christ, by seeing His salvation complete without any works of our own; or, in the words of St. Paul to the Ephesians, "we are saved *by grace* through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast;" but if works contribute at all to our salvation, we have something whereof to boast, Let us not then do good works with a view of being saved by them; lest we frustrate the grace of Christ, for "we are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," and are no longer under the law, (enforcing obedience by the penalty of death if we disobey it,) but under grace, where nothing is looked for but gratitude and love.

The faith of Christians being in general so weak, no wonder their love is weak also. It is the natural consequence of faith, that it works by love, and the greater our faith is, the greater also is our love. When we believe that God really has loved us, and is "just and faithful to forgive us our sins;" when we see that He hath already pardoned them; Christ having borne the punishment due unto them; then our hearts are set at liberty to love God. But whilst we are striving to obey the law as a covenant of works, and find perpetually that we fall short, no wonder we have hard thoughts of God. We should ever then remember, that Christ "hath redeemed us from the curse of the law;" that we are justified by faith without the works of the law."

Self-righteousness is another great sin of most religious charac-

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ters. I am sure I have felt it mine, and it is a sin which destroys all joy and peace in the gospel. St. Paul describes it Rom. x. 3, "For they, going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." That is, they try to make themselves good enough to be saved, instead of looking upon Christ as having already saved them, and perceiving that they have nothing to do but receive that salvation by faith, as the Apostle goes on, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to all them that believe:" that is, Christ hath fulfilled the whole law in our place, and what he hath done is imputed to us, as if we had done it, the moment we believe in Him.

You will, I dare say, have observed, my dear mother, in reading the Acts of the Apostles, that wherever the gospel was received, the people were filled with joy. The Angel to the Shepherds calls it "good tidings of great joy to all people;" thus should we consider it. Paul tells us it is "the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards us," (Titus iii, 4.) We are in general slow of heart to believe these glad tidings, to give credit to the word of God in this matter; but do we not dishonour God's faithfulness by this? St. John says, "He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son; and this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life."

The great principle of Christianity is, that we are not under the law, but under grace; we are dead to the law, have nothing more to fear or expect from it, for if we do look for any thing from the law, Christ hath died in vain, we are yet in our sins. We were under bondage, but Christ hath purchased our liberty.

"Being bought with a price, let us then glorify God in our bodies, and in our spirits, which are his;" this is the natural effect of the Gospel, as it is taught by the Holy Spirit to all sincere Christians; it calls us, by all the endearing ties of love and gratitude, to obey God. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God; for we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry,

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Abba, Father." "The fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace," &c. Hence the Christian gives God his heart, and not merely his outward services.

I have written this as the fruit of my own experience and reading of the Scriptures, in order to give my dearest mother comfort and pleasure; to show how delightful a thing real Christianity is. I am persuaded we live vastly below our real privileges, and that we might live far happier lives than we do. Let us look at what Christ hath obtained for us, and look more to Him for what we hope He will do in us, by "purifying us unto Himself, a peculiar people, zealous of good works;" for He is the Author (the Source, and Spring, and Giver,) and also the Finisher of our faith. O that we may be able to say with Peter, "Whom, having not seen, we love; in whom, though now we see Him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory; receiving the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls." What abundant cause then have we to rejoice in the Lord!

This letter will not be dull and tedious to my mother, if it only contains the sentiments which give me most pleasure, and which I believe to be the first principles of Christianity; but I trust they are in the main the sentiments of my mother also. If this be real Christianity, (and almost every sentence is taken from the Scriptures) how little is it known in the Christian world, where it would be ridiculed as rant and enthusiasm. But it is an important truth. which we should ever bear in mind, that we are not to be judged by men, but by the word of God, which the opinion of our fellow-creatures will not in any measure alter, nor will it affect the judgment of God in that day. St. Paul says, "Do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ."

I have no particular news, Miss B—— had a letter from John, who is well, and had been at Hannah More's house. I do indeed look upon it as a great privilege,—having such a brother! We open our minds very fully on all subjects, and are, I trust, completely united in interest, hope, love, and affection; and, though we

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cannot live together here, we hope we shall shortly be gathered together, where there is no more separation, nor mourning, nor absence; for this great thing, Christ hath purchased for us, and we trust in Him, that in due time He will raise us up to his heavenly kingdom. That God, who is now with and about me, and is also about my mother, may ever bless her, and keep her, is the continual prayer of her affectionate Son,

E. BICKERSTETH.

His father had been much interested in improvements he was making in some newly-enclosed land on Kirkby Common; he had met with difficulties in taking possession of it, and his son had been able to procure him the legal information he required: he was, however, far more anxious to raise his father's mind above the petty cares of the world, and with this view wrote as follows:—

November 7th, 1810.

MY DEAR FATHER,

Why should you have any care at all about money matters? Our God has hitherto abundantly provided for you, more, I dare say, than you expected. O let us not doubt but He will continue to provide for us, let us live more upon Him, and depend upon His promises. He says, Be doing good, and verily thou shalt be fed. The life of faith is one of the pleasantest lives in the world; it is a life without fear, care, or anxiety; it sees all things working together for good; it sees God ordering all things for our benefit, it sees all things purchased for us by the blood and merits of Christ. Thus "godliness is profitable to all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." . . .

There seems no end to your troubles about the common. May we endeavour to learn the lesson which God would teach us in every event. Worldly troubles are doubtless designed to wean our thoughts from this world. It shows us the vanity of having our

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hopes fixed on worldly enjoyments. If our happiness be fixed on this world, the most worthless fellows can destroy it; it is subject to ten thousand casualties; we are never secure for a moment: but there is a peace and happiness which the world neither gives nor can take away. Martyrs have possessed it at the stake, and in the flames; as one said, "he felt as if he were on a bed of roses;" thus all the powers and malice of men cannot injure him whose hopes are set upon God, for God delivers him out of the hand of his enemies.

His brother had been attending the dying-bed of one who had deferred preparation for eternity till her last days; Mr. Bickersteth wrote thus on the subject to his parents:—

September 13, 1810.

Maria was not sensible of her extreme danger till a few hours before she died, when the minister was sent for, and she continued in fervent prayer, as was seen by the motion of her lips to the last. It is an awful thing to defer preparation for so vast a change to the last hours of life,—to leave an eternity of happiness or misery to depend upon the right employment of a few moments. I trust Maria is rejoicing with her Redeemer; but if regret can enter heaven, I think it must be caused by only having fled to Christ for refuge in the last moments of expiring life. To stand on the brink of two eternities, to know that a few moments will bring us to that country where change is impossible, and where the difference is so vast, as inexpressible torment and woe, or inexpressible happiness and joy, to hear the words, "Depart ye cursed!" or "Come ye blessed!"—can any thing be more awful? O then, what would we give to be assured we were going to a known Friend, who had prepared the way for us,—to an Advocate whose plea is unanswerable!

You have no idea of what vast importance I see these matters at

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present. Every thing seems little and indifferent in comparison of them. You know I do not mean by this, that business may be neglected; it is possible to be "fervent in spirit, (as St. Paul says) and not slothful in business;" but this salvation I see to be the great business for every man, the thing for which he came into the world; the thing without which he will be for ever ruined. I trust you will excuse my dwelling upon this, in which I feel we have all so immense a stake. We are indeed all nearly in Maria's state; we stand on the brink of two eternities, and no man can tell what a day may bring forth, but it is astonishing how custom or corruption blind our minds to these truths.

His letters bear testimony to the joy which he found in the ways of Christ. He was staying for a time at Mr. Bleasdale's house at Walworth, when he wrote;—"We are enjoying delightful weather, under a kind Providence. The sun shines into my room in the morning, and I hear the birds singing when I awake: the delightful thoughts of a kind and heavenly Father sometimes fill my heart, and I feel something of what David said. 'When I awake up, I am still with Thee.' How pleasant it is to see God reconciled to us in Jesus Christ, and to see that we are His children by adoption, through faith in Him! It is pleasant to cast all 'our cares upon Him, knowing that He careth for us;' indeed His favour is better than life itself, and 'in His presence is fulness of joy.'"

On September 26th he wrote: "Every blessing comes with ten-fold pleasure, when we receive them as from a kind Father. What a thousand unknown joys Christianity opens! I am never melancholy, except after hearing the nonsense, to say the least, about which the world in general converses, or hearing the swearing, and seeing the open sins, so common in the world, or when faith is weak

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and corruptions prevail in myself. Of Christ, who is the true wisdom, I must ever say, 'His ways are ways of pleasantness, and all His paths are peace." On November 3rd, he wrote again to his parents : "Though I sometimes regret having so much of my time employed in business, and think it would be much pleasanter to give a little more to my favourite studies and more interesting pursuits, yet there is great comfort in reflecting that a gracious God overrules all events, and, being reconciled to us through His dear Son, overrules them all for our good. Only let us, through faith in Him, and by His grace, go on in the plain path of duty, and then, not only life, and the world, and things present, but death and the things to come are ours, and will add to our happiness. What rich, what unspeakable benefits a hearty reception of Christianity gives us! At first, it appears harsh, and says, 'Take up the cross daily, forsake all, and follow me.' 'Cut off the right hand, enter the straight gate;' but how abundant the recompense! if there is a cross, there is a crown—if we leave all, we obtain all; if we cut off the right hand, we enter the kingdom of heaven; if we pass the straight gate, we obtain eternal life, and we have only to ask, in sincerity and faith, for strength to overcome all difficulties, and the battle is as it were won, the race is run, and the prize obtained."

His correspondence with his beloved brother John continued to be a great source of comfort. From his superior judgment he still sought guidance, in any efforts he was making for the good of others. His natural reserve of character made faithfulness, as in the case of his friend Mr. Davies, a peculiarly difficult duty, but the earnestness of his spirit at this time overcame every obstacle. The two

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brothers had a friend, about whose spiritual state they were anxious; but he was an elderly man, and they were under considerable obligations to him; it was not easy to know in what way to approach him. The first allusion is to him in the following correspondence.

Hatton Court, June 18, 1810.

MY DEAR JOHN,

I have been much engaged, or I should have written before, for it is a great pleasure to write to a Christian brother, to whom I can open my heart. I have now but little time, and much to say.

The Sunday after I received your letter, I spoke to Mr. B. on the pleasure I had derived from attending the sacrament, and if I recollect right, hinted the duty; he said, no doubt I had, and would find it so, and seemed rather pleased with what I had said. I then asked if he did not think it possible he could go; he said he could not kneel, and he did not like to go even to Church on that account. This was an objection I was not prepared for, and I said no more. He did not seem offended, but if I could have been of use to his soul, that is of no consequence at all. I should be content if he were to forbid me his house, so that I might meet him again, and rejoice with him in heaven. I undertook this in prayer. O may our God give his blessing to it! I will follow your further directions here, and recollect there is nothing I dare not attempt, through Christ strengthening me.

Mr. Bickersteth then gives his brother extracts of letters from his family, which led him to hope that his religious correspondence with them was not wholly useless. He afterwards refers to some one, in whose case he feared he had not used the caution which was peculiarly necessary. He had spoken, he feared, unguardedly, and had subsequently written to him.

My heart burst out almost contrary to my inclination. I must

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bear witness to the truth; however I would certainly become all things to all men, with the object of winning souls, and would pray that I may walk in wisdom. I hope I wrote with humility and affection. I know not what effect this letter may have, it is in the hands of God. He giveth the increase, to Him I look for a blessing. I cannot see him, standing as I am persuaded, on the edge of a precipice, without trying to pluck him back. At any rate I must deliver my own soul. But I know who it is that giveth a blessing on all our endeavours. He has long had my prayers; how can I expect success or an answer to them, unless I use the means God gives me? I trust I begin to see more of the meaning of my Saviour's words, "My kingdom is not of this world." I desire to have neither part nor lot in the world. To me, at present, it seems a matter of perfect indifference, whether I am rich or poor, great or despised; the only thing desirable seems to be, a single eye and heart towards God, a heart dead to the world, and alive only to Christ. To be wise to win souls seems the greatest wisdom, and the spirit of prayer and thanksgiving, and the light of God's countenance, the greatest pleasure. I am sensible there has been a great falling away in my conduct; these thoughts were once before familiar to me, now I enjoy them again, and I would not let them go for all the treasures of the world. I perceive throughout the Scriptures that the people of God, wherever they have been, were an afflicted, despised people, they have been strangers and pilgrims on earth. It now seems to me to be a very small matter to be judged by men; my Judge is the Lord, and if I can approve myself his faithful disciple, it is all I am anxious about. Yet still corruption rages and prevails; the Devil ever tempts those that seek the Lord, and I would ever answer him, "Get thee behind me! Satan!" In Christ Jesus, I shall ever triumph over the world, the flesh, and the devil. He is my strength, my light, and my glory, for ever and ever. To Him be praise.

I am not so anxious about books as I was; had I the honour, the privilege, and the blessing, to be a minister of my Divine Mas-

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ter, it would be my duty to read many books; as it is, I bless the Lord for the many excellent helps I have in this way. I read them with pleasure. I derive instruction from them, especially such writers as Milner; but still knowledge comes from God, His word is the treasury of divine knowledge. I find more in one verse in the Bible than in volumes of other books. Prayer is the great means of attaining knowledge; he who reads the Bible with prayer, cannot but attain divine wisdom. I know you wish to see my heart. I know you pray for me, and I open my heart to you, to enable you to pray for me. O let me then have your prayers, that I may be dead to the world, that I may have a broken, humble spirit, that I may be base in mine own eyes, that I may be stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; and never, oh never, draw back to perdition, or fall away from grace! If I were with you, I could have much pleasant conversation; as it it is, I must be brief. Mr. W. is in town, to my great pleasure. How he adorns his profession! it is quite edifying to be in his company, and to see how, whilst he is in the world, he is not of the world. I am in want of family sermons. In general I write one in the course of the week; but with so many other things to do; it is sometimes a labour, yet it is difficult to find any that exactly suit the family. I write too from my own experience, and therefore can speak what I write with more feeling and earnestness, but I see no fruit at all as yet; however, the seed springs not up in a day, and prayer is the great means of gaining an increase. O that we may be wise to win souls; let us recollect every inducement for this. By this we bring an increase of praise to our God, and by this we honour Him who hath loved us, forgiven us all our sins, be they as scarlet or crimson; hath washed us, and given Himself for us, and we trust will yet sanctify us unto Himself, and purify us as His peculiar people, zealous of good works. O how ought we to love Him who hath so loved us. I remain your friend and brother, doubly dear in the bonds of Christian affection,

E. BICKERSTETH.

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FROM MR. J. BICKERSTETH.

Trinity College, Cambridge, June 19, 1810.

MY DEAREST BROTHER,

I am much obliged to you for your letter, and think its contents of such importance as to require an immediate answer. I am glad however of the cause to recreate myself this day at least (his birthday) with a few reflections, which naturally enough occur on a subject so important as that which engages your present attention. I feel particularly thankful that you have been able plainly to state to Mr. B—— the vast importance and benefit of frequenting the Lord's table. It is a weight off my shoulders; and I ought to be humbled in confessing a doubt whether I should have had equal courage. At the same time, as we are all prone to err, and as my tendency is the contrary way, I do not think it unsuitable (I hope with a right spirit) to caution you against verging to the other extreme. I am the rather led to this, from one or two expressions which you make use of, particularly that of making it a point of no consequence to offend, if you benefit the soul. Much as I would glory in any good done, I trust, to any one soul, yet, if I mistake not, it becomes us, as far as we can, to avoid giving offence, *on this very account*, that doing so needlessly would be the likeliest of all possible means to injure the soul which we designed to benefit. The fact is, truth is always better insinuated by means of the affections, than obtruded on the understanding without the concurrence of the affections; and I esteem it a matter of much importance, that we should consider in all cases the relative situation in which we stand to others, which is generally best done by placing ourselves in their station, and them in ours. The great excellency of this rule consists in this, that it destroys self-love, or rather places it in an opposite scale, so as to weigh in favour of those we attempt to convince; and is further a rule of universal application. I hope, if these are cautions, they are not the result of cold or indifferent speculation; very little would it become me, after so long an ex-

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perience of God's goodness to myself, after having seen something of the value of my own soul, and the unspeakable mercies of my Redeemer, to damp the ardour of others, which I ought rather to rejoice in beholding; or, with a view to my own deficiencies, to desire to depress it lower than it would otherwise rise. I should think this day ill celebrated, if I were capable of expressing such feelings now; or rather, knowing of what human nature is capable, if I did not renounce and condemn them as inconsistent with my profession. To bear witness to the truth is an indispensable duty; but very true it is, that this is sometimes best done by example chiefly, and sometimes only to be done by example. I think I have Scripture authority for this, or I would not urge it; or if I am wrong, I hope to be ready to retract on conviction. I rejoice much in the piety which pervades your letters and practice; at the same time (I do not hesitate to use a freedom, which I would wish to be exercised towards myself), I cannot but trace something like a soreness, which is a natural effect of opposition, but is an enemy to meekness and humility. An afflicted and despised people Christians are, compared with the great world in which they are placed, as the Jews once were, compared with the nations among whom they dwelt; but, considered in their true light, even men of the world confess that they are the excellent of the earth. The Christian life is also a warfare, but the Christian soldier is no object of contempt, for God makes even his enemies to be at peace with him; and the exhortation of Paul to Timothy, "Let no man despise thy youth," implies that in some cases it is a man's own fault if he is despised. I write with diffidence on a subject so important, and with so deep a consciousness of my own depravity and vileness, that, if I did not humbly hope I was actuated by right motives, I should lay my hand upon my mouth. I sincerely rejoice in the accounts you give of the letters from Kirkby. How gracious is the God we serve! What are we that he should make us partakers of such blessings!

I ever am your truly affectionate brother and friend,

JOHN BICKERSTETH.

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Hatton Court, June 22, 1810.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

Let me thank you for your last, which contained many excellent observations, and which I hope God will bless to my use. Your deep sense of your own imperfection may well humble me in the dust. I know, the more a man knows of his own heart, and of the holy law and perfections of God, the more humble he must be; the more he increases in spiritual-mindedness, the more sense he has of his own vileness, and of the extreme power and prevalence of indwelling corruption. I may judge, then, something of my sad state, by the pride and the vanity which I see in my heart and conduct. I do, however, with some diffidence and hesitation, and with an earnest desire that I may not deceive myself, think that you have in some measure mistaken my disease and my danger. I think my great failing is, not that I have too great a contempt for the world or the opinion of the world, but that I am far too apt to give way to the spirit of the world, to its abominable hypocrisy, selfishness, love of praise, desire of esteem, and fondness for pleasures; my disease is, not that I am too careless of offending, but too anxious to please the world. I would not have you to mistake me. I fully admit the necessity of speaking the truth in love, of showing, when you speak, that it is only truth, and a desire of the welfare of others, that compels you to speak; of speaking in humility, and considering the character, situation, and abilities of those you address; of studying the best mode of access, and the most likely way of securing attention. All these I would endeavour to attain, and I think your rules very excellent and useful; and above all, I think whatever we may say is all in vain, unless it is enforced by the disinterestedness and consistent integrity of one's own life. But I know not that a more silent example, in any case, is all that Christianity requires; when we see iniquity abounding, when we hear another swear, or jest on the Scriptures, or ridicule holiness, or speak evil of good men, and so forth, in such cases I think the

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Christian should either retire or reprove; or if both be impossible, at least condemn by his looks, and not merely show by his conduct that he will not speak evil, &c. I think, in such cases, if any opportunity offers, it becomes us to speak our sentiments fully, freely, and candidly, and who knows how a word thus spoken in season may profit those that hear? At any rate, we should let our light shine before men; can we see our God, our Father, and our Benefactor, our Redeemer, offended and despised, and not burn with sorrow? Alas, that this should so often be my case! Can we see our fellow-creatures, our companions, who might be partakers with us of eternal glory, "heaping up wrath against the day of wrath," and ruining their own souls by the sins we are witnesses to? Can we see this and not be concerned—not be anxious to show them their danger? Here, my brother, here I am guilty; here censures might justly fall upon me, and I would say nothing against it.

And now as to another important point, how far is it possible for a good sincere Christian; a true disciple of Christ, to be esteemed in the world? As a man of integrity and uprightness, I think the world will very often admire the Christian; but here I again in some measure, (and I would do it with unfeigned humility, and only because I think it to be the truth), differ from you. I think the world in all cases despises and hates the Christian, as far as regards the great peculiarities of his religion. (John xv. 17—21.) I think the Christian lives, even in the Christian world, as his Master did, "despised and rejected of men;" his light (it is light borrowed from the great luminary) shines in darkness, and the darkness comprehends it not. His principles, his practice, condemn the world; no wonder therefore that the world opposes him. I think the great perfection of a Christian is, when his faith enables him to overcome the world, when he dies to it daily. Those words of our Saviour, to the Pharisees, seem to me very awful;—"Verily they have their reward!" O let me live in poverty, contempt, pain, nakedness; in sickness, prisons, or captivity; let me

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be counted as the off-scouring of the earth, rather than have my reward in this life. O let me ever recollect—"if we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him, if we deny Him, He also will deny us;" "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, of him will I be ashamed, when I shall come in my Father's glory." What then is this world, the favour of which I find myself so often anxious to gain?—it is mere breathing flesh, it will very shortly be in the grave, and what! shall I forfeit the favour of God for the breath of mortals? I acknowledge, my brother, the great necessity of humility and meekness, the great danger of pride. I would cultivate the first, and kill the last at the foot of the cross. Who can be proud, when surveying his Saviour? Where is boasting then? it is excluded. What have we, which we have not received? what have we which we have in any measure deserved?

Your affectionate Brother,

E. BICKERSTETH.

June 23rd.

P. S.—If I had more time, I could write more fully on the interesting subject of this letter: but I think an attentive perusal of Heb. xi, and xiii. verses 13, 14, with prayer, will shew in a strong light that "the kingdom of Christ is not of this world,—that is, that we have not our reward here in any measure. David, not the world, calls the righteous, "the excellent of the earth." The Pharisees and men of the world never esteemed our Saviour:—we see in the example of Korah, how Moses was despised, and a continued series of miracles could hardly keep the Jews from rebelling against him. David, though a king, could not escape the contempt of the world. There are indeed very few instances to the contrary. We must also be conformed to the example of Christ's suffering. I do not think we differ much on the subject. I would not lay more difficulties in the way of Christianity than there are, nor make the narrow gate narrower; but I think it of the first importance, entirely to renounce the esteem and honours of the world, as in any measure the object of our pursuit. If I should possess so dangerous a talent, I would

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endeavour to use it to the glory of God; and if it can be gained, without in any measure bending from the strictness of Christian principles and practice, I would take it, but only with a view to win souls, and with a fear lest I should have my reward here. These are my principles—I think they are founded on Scripture. My practice is wofully different: O let us pray for each other, that we may die to the world, and live only to Christ! By our prayers, we make richer presents to each other, than if we were to give thousands of gold or silver. May God lead us into all truth, by the illumination of his Holy Spirit, through the merit and mediation of his only Son, Jesus Christ our Lord and Master.

The following letter alludes to some conversations he had had with his brother on the subject of joining Dissenters in worship. The principles it professes were held by him to the end of his life; though, when a minister of the Established Church, he felt it a duty to abstain from any thing that might cause needless offence.

Hatton Court, Oct. 31, 1810.

MY DEAREST BROTHER,

The great difficulty I have found, is to let practice keep pace with knowledge; not merely to have the notions, but the life of Christianity; the Christian temper brought into daily life. Here, I cannot but confess, my dearest brother, how sadly I failed in some conversation with you; nothing for some time gave me greater doubts whether the work of grace could be real in my soul, than when I saw how little effect my principles had in giving meekness and humility. Not that I did then, or do now think, I hold any that I do not firmly believe to be contained in the Scriptures; nor in this matter can I submit, and I am sure you do not wish me, to any human authority whatever; but I am well persuaded, if right principles are savingly embraced in my heart, they will produce humility, gentleness, forbearance, love, and all Christian graces in the life. . .

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It is a great pleasure when I find my principles similar to the Reformers in the Homilies, and to the Fathers of the Church. It is also a pleasure to me, that we, my dearest brother, agree on the most essential points, as indeed Christians of almost all classes, excepting Socinians, Arians, and Pelagians, do. To Christians of all other classes, who love the Lord with sincerity, I would give the right hand of fellowship, however they may differ in non-essentials; nor should I, after mature consideration, hesitate to go to their assemblies. I know you differ from me here, and in particular situations I think it might not be advisable; but I am persuaded we strengthen the hands of the enemies of Christ by that distance which is often kept between real Christians of different classes, and most effectually prevent all hopes of union. Some of the most lively and pious Christians I know, do not hesitate to go wherever they can get benefit, though they statedly go to our place on Sundays. I had an opportunity of hearing an admirable sermon from Mr. Jay, at Surrey Chapel, and I should think it wrong to neglect such opportunities. Let the enemies of Christ rage and storm; they must be overcome by meekness, patience, and gentleness; not by being ashamed of the gospel, or being afraid to associate with those who profess and adorn it. I am not therefore anxious to be exonerated from the charge of Methodism, nor to prove my principles by the Church of England; I build them, and would always profess to build them, upon the Scripture, and to adhere to the Church of England because I believe it to be the purest part of the Church of Christ (all things considered) in the world, and the nearest to the Scripture. The Dissenters think their establishments to be so also. We may differ about externals, but we agree in internal matters, on the spiritual life, on the Deity and the love of Christ, and on the influence of the Holy Spirit, and on the Atonement. I apprehend these are very different from many separations condemned in Scripture (as 2 John 9, 11; Jude 19.) In looking occasionally at Warner's Ecclesiastical History, I cannot but think that the Dissenters have often been very cruelly used,

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especially from the time of Elizabeth to the Revolution ; and that much of their dissent rests with some of the successors in the authority, but not of the spirit, of Latimer, Cranmer, and Ridley. This letter has run on more in a controversial spirit than I wished. I must trust to your kindness for an excuse, I wished to explain my thoughts more at large on some points on which we had conversed, and then for ever to drop those unimportant ones on which we differ. If we win Christ, and adorn his doctrine by being partakers of his Spirit, we shall have all we want ; and how great is our privilege! what we want is *freely* offered; one would think words could not be more comprehensive than Rev. xxii. 17. This precious stream of life is always running, we may at all times drink and be refreshed. Christ being ours here, He will be ours for ever, therefore we may always rejoice in Him. O how sweet are those moments in which, whether in the midst of business or of our devotion, we are sensible of His presence, His favour, His love, and His complete salvation ! The business of a very heavy term is now fast approaching, which will confine me closely to work ; I know you will also be busy, yet still we may both, through grace, be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.

Your affectionate Brother and Friend,

E. BICKERSTETH.

Mr. J. Bickersteth was expecting to take his degree in January 1811, and was besides harassed with some difficulties with regard to the living of Acton in Suffolk, which was to be the scene of his future labours : these circumstances called forth all his brother's sympathy.

November 6, 1810.

MY BELOVED BROTHER,

You know what St. Paul says to the Corinthians, " O ye Corinthians, our heart is enlarged towards you ;" just that feeling have I towards you, my dear brother ; your troubles and difficulties increase my affection. When I consider how much I am indebted to

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my Lord in you, when I consider your forbearance and kindness towards me, when I consider how much the Lord has blessed you in many excellent fruits of the Spirit, and even in your present trials, (for we must count it all joy when we fall into them,) I cannot but feel warm sentiments of esteem and affection.

I have, according to your wish, looked into the law books, but to shew you the exact state of the case, I must send you many extracts of Acts of Parliament, and Reports, which would only disturb and harass your mind. Let me take this business entirely out of your hands at present. With this view, I propose to write fully to Mr. W——, our excellent and valuable friend in Christ, upon the subject, either this night or to-morrow. If possible, then, never think of the matter, and I will let you know the result of our correspondence when we come to a decision.

Your letter made me ashamed of mine,—it appeared as if I were adding to your distractions; but it was not written with a wish to trouble you to write more upon it, (though this will always be a pleasure, because you write in love) but I think I had made some kind of a promise, that I would never go elsewhere than to the Church, and I wished to shew that my sentiments were in this respect changed. But, dear brother, we both act on the same principle, I am persuaded we both act in this matter with a view to the glory of the Lord Christ, and from love to His cause and people; and very possibly I may err in judgment, (though I think otherwise, and am persuaded in my own mind) and be weak in the faith; but we do all to the Lord, and I trust God hath received us. That there may be differences with a right spirit in both, I think is very evident from Rom. xiv. 2, 3; yet still we must forbear our exercise of privileges, where we might offend a weak brother. (1 Cor. viii. 11,)

I have a fellow-feeling in your labours and distractions; we have also happily "a High Priest who is touched with a feeling of our infirmities." It is delightful to consider, He is with us in the midst of all our troubles; it is delightful when we can look through them

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at Him. But I find it hard work, often, to keep corruption from breaking forth, in impatience, or some evil temper. I know I often find it a very difficult task to bear continual interruption, or the impatience and fretfulness of others, with that meekness and gentleness which becomes the follower of a crucified Saviour, our light, our life, and our glory. May the Lord enable us in patience to possess our souls!

You have, my dearest brother, my continual prayers for your happiness. Sometimes I feel my heart much enlarged in prayer for you, and for other dear friends, especially the family of Christ. O that we could decidedly see all our family giving themselves up to Christ without reserve! While I think my prayers may be heard in this respect, I would pray continually and fervently, even in the midst of my walks; and do you, my brother, join me more and more here; they must be heard, if we are not wanting; for the Lord would not give the spirit of prayer, unless He meant to send us a gracious answer.

What a delightful enjoyment is prayer, when the Lord indeed enables us to pray! To know that our God is our Father, to come before Him as a child, to lay all our wants of every kind before Him; to know, by the working of his Spirit, that He hears us; to commit our temporal and eternal concerns entirely to Him,—I know no happiness so great, no time so pleasantly spent, no joy so pure and so excellent; and then, when humbled in the midst of this by our own corruption, to see ourselves complete in Christ, our prayers accepted through Him, and to leave them with Him,—this gives peace and comfort, and abundantly recompenses every outward trouble.

We have, through the kindness of Mr. Budd, a meeting every Saturday night from eight to nine or ten, at his house in Bridewell, for religious improvement. The society consists of about ten, and I hope I shall find it useful. I must now conclude. I shall not expect to hear from you till after the examination, but as it is easier reading than writing, if I have any thing to send I will

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write. You will find time for prayer, and I hope there continue to remember me, and doubtless hereafter we shall esteem such prayers the truest proof of love and affection. In haste, but always

Your affectionate brother,

E. BICKERSTETH.

Hatton Court, Dec. 1810.

MY DEAREST AND BELOVED BROTHER,

My heart is often with you, and my prayers, through grace, are sent up for you in the midst of your present distractions, that they may all work together for the good of your soul, and prepare you for your glorious office, proclaiming a crucified Saviour, the hope of fallen, lost, and ruined man. I have wished to write, but my engagements are, as you know, numerous, and must be attended to.

Nothing, I think, hinders the life hid with Christ in God so much as cares and distractions; and therefore it is that our compassionate Lord has directed us not to be anxious about worldly matters; therefore Paul expresses this affectionate desire, "I would ye were without carefulness," and says, "Be careful for nothing." Now these are promises, every command being a promise, and we must aim to exercise our faith upon them. It has often encouraged me in worldly difficulties, to consider those gracious words of our Lord, "Take no thought for the morrow." We may well leave the future with Him, who has so abundantly blessed us in the past, and has given us an assured hope that He will continue to be with us, and be our guide even unto death. I have been much delighted in reading the 46th Psalm. It is a noble exercise of faith in difficulties. O were it not that we have God, our all-sufficient Saviour, to go to in all our difficulties, what a sad case should we be in! for many are the afflictions of the servants of God, far more outward troubles, perhaps, than the worldly, but the Lord still delivereth and will deliver.

You know all this, dear brother, but will always excuse me opening my heart, for so we strengthen one another. I shall be

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glad when I may hope to have you for a more regular correspondent, and we may communicate more of the state of our hearts to each other, as few things are more serviceable; at least I have found it a great benefit. . . .

I cannot say my desire to serve the Lord in the work of the ministry, and even especially as a missionary, if it please Him to call me, is at all abated; but I do trust, resignation to His will is abundantly increased, so that I know He cannot do wrong with me. I have prayed that, if this desire be not of Him, He would take it from me, and this continually. I find hence a peace of mind enabling me to commit the matter entirely to Him, and to trust in Him, to make my way plain and clear. Dearest brother, I am now opening the innermost thoughts of my heart unto you, as I ought, seeing we are more closely united in Christ than by the ties of natural affection, and in that view have but one aim, to lay ourselves out as much as we can for Him, It is a sad thing that, where we have been so much loved, and had so much forgiven, we should love so little. I would pray, then, continually, for a more ardent love to Christ. . . .

Your affectionate brother,

E. BICKERSTETH.

Hatton Court, 1811.

MY VERY DEAR BROTHER,

Let me congratulate you on the degree you have taken; it is exactly that which a Father of mercy and love saw to be most suited to your happiness here and for ever. If your heart is carnal like mine, it would have desired a higher; but a Father, who loves us better than we love ourselves, and knows better what is fit for us, has appointed your station in the greatest love. O how are we bound to bless His name! It was my prayer that God might bless your studies, and give you success as far as was for your good: I am persuaded He has done so. O what a mercy it is when we can rejoice in the will of God, though contrary to our desires!

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It has been, and is my prayer, that Satan may not have any advantage against you by reason of your present difficulties. I think I know something, by bitter experience, of his devices and temptations, and how exactly he adapts them to our circumstances. May we resist him through the faith of Jesus, and then he will flee from us. I dare say you have felt some motions of discontent, some hard thoughts of God, some repinings cast into your mind by him. It is our glory to use the strength of Christ in overcoming them. At such times we learn something of that body of sin and death we carry about us, and are compelled to cry out, "There is no soundness in my flesh." Then is Jesus very precious to our souls, for the viler we feel ourselves, the more we feel and enjoy his grace, and love, and complete salvation. I have indeed experienced this, much, latterly, so that I can say, It is good for me to have been in the valley of humiliation.

It is surprising how the love of God is expressed in crossing our natural desires and wishes. I have found this very much in worldly events, and also in spiritual matters. We should like peace of mind, and joy, and comfort in religion; but we are often brought into great fears, and doubts, and distresses, that we may be duly humbled and proved; but all, I am persuaded, will eventually work for our good. Thus I find the house of mourning (sorrow, contrition, and a broken spirit) is better than the house of joy, the fruits are more abiding and solid. It makes us cling closer to Christ, and seek Him more earnestly, with many tears and strong cries. I doubt not, I am describing what has passed in your heart as well as mine; but O how perverse, how rebellious has my spirit been! how difficult I have found it in worldly matters to keep it to outward decency, much more to inward submission! Indeed, my dear brother, I have been sometimes humbled, almost to despair of my state, till I was enabled to see, that Christ came to save those who have no hope in themselves. My song shall be of Him, who is my light, my life, and my glory, all the day long. O what a mighty, loving, gracious Saviour we have! Why, O why, are our hearts, or rather my heart, so cold,

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so little filled with love to Him! We cannot, I find, resist our evil temper without Him; but He, as Milner says, is *free* for our use; whatever is left with Him in simple faith is sure to prosper. When we lose sight of Him, and lose our watchfulness, we fall into temptation, into deadness and dryness of soul. When we live upon Him, we can, as David says, leap over a wall, overcome all difficulties. I long, my dearest brother, to see you, that we might have some interesting conversation together. Paper is but a slow medium of conveying thoughts, to what that would be. I trust in some things we should differ less than we formerly did. I have been much blessed by a greater knowledge and intimacy with Mr. Budd, one of the best Christians I know. I think I see more, that religion must be in the heart, more than in the head, that notions without life are dangerous deceptions, and that a man may have but imperfect notions of the truth, who yet may have the life and power of godliness in his soul. I have acquired my knowledge more by reading, hitherto, than by experience; which has this disadvantage, that it puffs up, and tempts one to rely more on knowledge, than to prove our own work, that we may have rejoicing in ourselves, and not in another. I would hope, I latterly have begun to experience some truths in my heart, which I formerly only knew in my head.

You have heard of dear R.'s success; I tremble while I rejoice. O that all may be overruled to his good! My father mentions with exultation the numerous respectable friends R—— has; here again I tremble, lest this friendship should be found enmity against God. O let him have our continual prayers! I find great, very great comfort in my prayers; and in many cases I find them much answered, sometimes remarkably. I have prayed that an evil temper might not break out in such a trial;—I have found it did not; I have prayed that some design might prosper, I have found it has prospered. Should I not say with David, then, "I love the Lord, because He hath heard my supplication?"

Mr. Pratt's Society have their first meeting next Friday. May

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our Lord, who is always present when two or three meet together in His name, be with our souls, direct and bless all our designs. The whole matter rests there, as I trust we are brought to see. W. R—— joined us this day at Hatton Court. There are some things very favourable in him, and I hope he will be a pleasant addition to our number. There have been some, on the whole, pleasant things in the office, which have given me very delightful thoughts. Swearing, and that coarse language which is so very offensive, have been long since banished, and I hope, a far different fruit is springing up. To the Lord be thanks, and praise for ever and ever. O may He strengthen that which I would fain hope He hath wrought! My dearest John, I have been thinking how we should love one another, who are not only closely united by nature, but I trust still more so by grace. In that bond I trust I can subscribe myself, your very affectionate brother,

E. BICKERSTETH.

The following letter refers to the friend, who had so kindly counselled him in his perplexities as to entering the ministry. It also expresses his feelings on first coming forward into public notice, as Secretary of the Spitalfields Benevolent Society. He had previously been a member of the Widows' Friend Society; and, fatiguing as business often was, had counted it a joy to devote his hours of rest, to fulfilling his Saviour's command, by visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction.

Hatton Court, Feb. 5th, 1811.

MY BELOVED BROTHER,

Many thanks for your last letter, which gave me great pleasure in many respects, and especially in the very pleasant view it gave of the state of your mind on the decision at the Senate-House. Indeed, I see in my own case, were I truly humbled, every event would

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excite gratitude, humility seems to me, the foundation of a grateful heart.

I have been anxious about L—— since I received your letter, and he has had my prayers, that he may be directed aright. I have always, as I think you know, had a sincere affection for him, and certainly his most excellent letter to me was far from diminishing my attachment, yet I confess I heard with pleasure of his going to the East Indies, and, with regret, of his having doubts about it; and though, I doubt not, he seeks direction from above, yet, should that prevent his friends giving such advice as they may be enabled to do? An indifferent person often sees what a party engaged cannot, and might be enabled to remove a doubt. The only probable causes I should think deterring L—— were, his humility, and that he does not see his way clear. The conversion of the world is, I doubt not, going on in God's own way; yet there must needs be preachers, and never was there so large a field opened as in the East Indies;—in no place do labourers seem more wanted, nor those more blessed who have gone. O what a crown of glory would L——'s be, if he sacrificed all, and in the strength and power of our Almighty Saviour, had *the gift of the grace given*, (so great is the privilege conceived by the Apostle Eph. iii. 7.), to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ! It seems astonishing almost, that this should not be a subject of the ambition, (if I may use a bad word in a good sense,) of every Christian, who has tasted the loving-kindness of the Lord, and how exactly He is suited to all our wants. I would I could return L——'s kindness to me, by suggesting any thing that might encourage him to go. I doubt not, many are longing for such a door as seems now opened to him.

It may appear presumptuous in me, suggesting these thoughts to you, or to him, but there is one comfort in speaking to Christians; they will not impute a bad motive, when they can impute a good one.

If I may say so, I should hardly think there is a speculative point in the Bible; the doctrines so invariably invigorate the practice, when they are received into the heart, and not into the head. . . . .

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Christian duties should be fully and minutely detailed, either as privileges which Christians are entitled to, may, and must attain, because Christ gives them to those that are truly justified, or, as that spiritual law, which as a schoolmaster is to bring the soul to Christ, lay it low in the dust before Him, to receive out of his fulness grace to fulfil it. But, if the law is detailed without leading to Christ, and showing Him willing and able to help, and without showing that we have no power of ourselves to think a good thought, will it not either drive men to despair, or tempt them to sit down and do nothing, or to rest in outward morality? May I say also, I think we should be afraid of censuring those who preach the true doctrines? Probably their sermons are the result of much continual prayer, and a long and tried experience, of many delightful views and discoveries of the unsearchable riches of Christ. Those riches are unsearchable, unfathomable; the Spirit takes and shows them to the believer, (John xvi. 14, 15.) as it pleases him, some more, some less. O may we rather strive to come up to their privileges, than be content with stopping short of counting all things but loss for Christ—at any rate, may we take the Apostle's rule, "Whereunto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing;" so will Christian love and union flourish among us, and we shall fight more against the enemies, within, and without.

Mr. Pratt's Society did not meet till last Friday, when eight of us assembled in his vestry in the chapel in Spitalfields. We entered into various resolutions, and are to call ourselves the Spitalfields Benevolent Society. Mr. Cooper is Treasurer, Mr. Pratt, President, and I was, contrary to my inclination, nominated Secretary. Having been forward in the matter, I could not easily decline it. It is not the labour I object to, but I am afraid of its leading me to neglect more immediate duties, and possibly bringing me more into public notice than I wish. I seem now to have got into a field of labour large enough. O may I be faithful in the talents entrusted to me! The objects of the Society are, visiting and relieving the poor, chiefly in Spitalfields, and affording them Christian instruc-

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tion, (the last, the chief object) and also for our own improvement; we are to meet once a month at first, and afterwards once a fortnight, at seven in the evening.

Your affectionate Brother,
E. BICKERSTETH.

His brother's settling in a quiet country parish recalled, though without any feeling of envy, his own suppressed desires; writing of some legal business in which he had been engaged, he adds:—

"How different and far more delightful is, and will be, your employment, my dearest John. While I am engaged in disputes and contentions; where it is very often difficult to tell which is the right course, and still more difficult to follow it; and where it is very easy to be carried away by the passions of the moment, beyond the bounds which cooler hours will show to be right;—you are engaged in spreading the gospel of peace, in making known the heavenly and consoling truths of Christianity, and in a business the most ennobling and animating in the world, the salvation of immortal souls. I say not this from envy or disappointment at my own choice; you, I think, will acquit me of these, and I feel myself quite unfit for, and unworthy of your high situation; but as my real thoughts, which I never wish to conceal from my brother. At the same time, I am very sensible that there are difficulties in your situation, and advantages in mine. May I improve those talents intrusted to me, and may we both be found faithful servants in the great day of account."

To Mr. Davis, the friend whom he had attended in a dangerous illness, and who had lately entered the ministry, he wrote:

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Hatton Court, April 20, 1811.

I agree with you, that one of the minor points very needful to be attended to, if we must attend to those things which are lovely and of good report, is the delivery and correctness of our address. Yet it appears to me, if the mind of the minister be duly impressed with his awful charge, his manner will always be sober and solemn. There is a meekness, mildness, and seriousness, attached to the real Christian character, which, though in different degrees according to natural character, in some measure pervades every Christian, who is brought to the knowledge of God his Saviour, and of himself.

It is very pleasant to see you actively engaged in the service of our great Master—the highest office the world can afford; but however faithful your sermons may be, however impressive, however forcible, I am persuaded you will find your private prayers the great means by which you will move your people. You know, as well as I, that not all the eloquence of Paul or Apollos can change the hard heart of man; the work is the Lord's, and he only giveth the increase. Eloquence may make admirers, partisans, and friends, but it will not make Christians: and one convert is worth far more than a whole world of admirers. My beloved minister (Mr. Budd) said, the greatest share beyond comparison of his prayers were given to his people: morning, evening, and at noon, he bore them on his heart before God; nay, his ejaculatory prayers were more constant for them than for any thing else. Did he hear of any affected, benefited, or offended at his ministry, he made them the subject of an especial prayer. This dear man has been greatly rewarded in benefiting many souls, who love him as children do their father.

I like very much your candour towards the Methodists, who, I think, are much undervalued by the Church in general; whilst I cannot but differ from them in some particulars, as a body, I think we may safely say, they love the Lord in sincerity. Why then, with Paul we may surely say, "Peace be with them!"

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CHAPTER VII.

DIFFICULTIES, AND THEIR REMOVAL.

A. D. 1810—1811.

THE expansive character of true religion was ever a favourite subject with Mr. Bickersteth. He fully realized it in his own experience. The more he attempted to do for Christ, the more he found himself able to do. His first efforts were for the spiritual welfare of his relatives, his companions, and the family where he lodged; his situation, he thought, precluded his visiting the poor of Christ's flock. Growing earnestness, however, overcame this seeming impossibility, and he soon found a way to the abodes of poverty and affliction, while his ardent spirit caught the flame of missionary zeal, which had lately been rekindled in the Church, and his earnest prayer was, that he might be sent to bear the glad tidings of peace to the distant heathen.

Amidst these efforts he was called upon to bear the reproach of the cross, and to meet with a check from a quarter where his heart most longed for full approbation. His letters occasioned anxiety to his parents; they thought he was carried away with religious enthusiasm: he spoke with much affection of a friend beneath him in rank, in a merchant's counting-house, and they feared that he would

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forget his position in society: his mother thought that there was an appearance, at least, of impropriety in his visiting widows, of which a censorious world would take advantage, and that he was in danger of encroaching on the ministerial office. A letter of caution was sent to him, which pained him deeply; he took the first opportunity of sending the following reply.

Hatton Court, Dec. 21, 1810.

BELOVED AND HONOURED PARENTS,

I put aside every thing else to give an immediate answer to your last affectionate and important letter. Persuaded as I am of your tender affection for me, sensible that you desire my best interests, temporal and eternal, everything urges me to be full and open with you. That I should ever give you a moment's pain, must be a serious grief to me, nor can you be in any way unhappy or uncomfortable without making me so. "Honour thy parents:" "Despise not the law of thy mother," has been in my case a privilege and a happiness. I cannot then, in any sense, differ from you without uneasiness, but I have a Parent of superior love, to whom is due superior gratitude and duty; happily these have never hitherto clashed, and I am persuaded they never will.

I will answer my mother's letter in order. I had long desired to give Sunday more entirely to religion, than I could by going to Harpur Street; this I believe I gave up before I belonged to that little Society for the relief of widows, to which I now do. There is nothing I am more desirous of (as a means of grace) than that the Sunday should be wholly devoted to God, as I have found nothing more beneficial to the promotion of religion in my heart, and have actually experienced much evil from the neglect of it. My conscience, I think, most approves what I have done here.

I became acquainted with my dear S. in a way which satisfied me, and I think would you. As to his principles and character, he belonged to the Widow's Friend Society, and was well known to

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my excellent minister Mr. Budd, who esteems him very highly, and who sometimes employs him in visiting those sick he cannot see himself. Oh! did you know him, you would say nothing against him.

As to visiting the widows, I cannot but conceive it a most important duty for all. It was a subject which had been long upon my thoughts, but I had done nothing. I accidentally (let me say, providentially) heard of a little Society for the purpose of finding out *proper* objects,—heard of that Society to which I belong. I enquired into the nature of it, attended a meeting or two, knew it had the sanction of Mr. Budd, who was its patron, and could not but approve of and join it; nor can I now, after a little more experience, repent of this, or in any measure condemn or disapprove it. Beloved parents, how can Christians satisfy their conscience on this subject, after reading James i. 27, without doing something of this kind. That command, or the duty there described, is not limited to ministers; it extends to all. Should we not imitate holy Job, and make the widow's heart to sing for joy? Oh! mother, could you know the good that has been done already, you would be the first to urge me forward! When we see one suffering under temporal affliction, shall we not endeavour to improve it to their spiritual good? if not so, where is our belief of the value of an immortal soul, and of the price of that redemption that was paid? You would not, to put it on another ground, deprive me of one of the highest pleasures I have: but indeed, my parents, I feel that I ought not to give this work up, and with sincerest love and affection for you, I must say *I dare not!*

"The world is censorious:" alas! the Scriptures assure us the whole world lieth in wickedness, and every day affords melancholy proof of this, and we must be content, with Moses, to count the reproach of Christ greater riches than the honours, wealth, and pleasures of this world. The best men have been generally the worst used. Our Saviour was counted a madman: (Mark iii. 21) and so was St. Paul: (Acts xxvi. 24; 2 Cor. v. 13). We must

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indeed live above the world, and count all things but loss for Christ; for he that does not, (in heart and spirit, if not actually,) forsake all and sell all, cannot be His disciple. Sincere Christians are often, with Paul, counted the off-scouring of all things, and this is a cross which we must take up even daily, if called thereto.

But let me not be misunderstood: I consider my character as a talent entrusted to my charge, which I should give up to none but the Master who gave it. It is our duty to provide things honest, not only in the sight of God, but in the sight of men also; and we are required to be wise as serpents, whilst we are harmless as doves. These things I desire to keep in view, and daily to pray for that wisdom which cometh from above. Keeping these in view, in the opinion of the good, my character, when known, cannot suffer, and that of the bad is of little moment.

"A zeal without knowledge," I allow to be very dangerous; our zeal must be guided by the Scriptures, and daily brought to that test, or it may do much harm; but it is well to be zealously affected in a good cause.

I heartily agree with my dearest mother, as to strict attention to Mr. B.'s business; and here what shall I say? I cannot contradict the confessions of my daily prayers, (for I write as in the presence of the Lord of all,) but I may say there are many points in which my present principles have made me much more strict than I formerly was, in attending the exact office-hours, &c. Yet to say, my mind never wandered after those subjects which have so much of my heart, or never more than it ought, is saying more than I can say. I trust your kind hint will be useful to me here. As to the study of the law, Mr. B. wished me, when I came to him, to give an hour each day to this; this has been my rule, (especially since, I trust, my principles have more influenced me), but here again various engagements have interrupted this, so that the hour, from eight to nine in the evening, has not by any means been so constantly devoted to this as I could wish. One evening every week I have been at Walworth. Yet I hope my present situation will show that

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duty has not been entirely neglected here. I am compelled to say thus much: however it shall be my aim, through grace, to be more attentive to this duty. As to other studies, dearest parents, neither my time, nor inclination, I was almost going to say, lead me to any but the Scriptures,—the one thing needful.

And now, as to enthusiasm and fanaticism,—if a sober deliberate view of the cost of becoming the disciple of a crucified Master, who has forewarned his followers that they must be a despised and persecuted people, who must forsake all in this world, if they would enter his glory,—if, on a sober, deliberate counting of the cost, seeing that life is short and uncertain, a day of judgment near, an eternity of happiness succeeding—a determination, in all cases, however the world or my dearest friends may judge or think, to submit myself to, and follow the will of God, as revealed in the Scriptures,—if this be enthusiasm, I glory in it; but this is not what my parents call enthusiasm, nor what they will, I trust, ever condemn. It is my anxious wish, and my continual prayer and study in all things, to be guided by the Scriptures, being satisfied they are a revelation from God. O let us not be deceived by the mere names of enthusiasm and fanaticism!

"Many have gone mad through religion," or rather, from the want of it; had they had more of it, (that is, of true knowledge of it), it would have made them different characters.

As to B., who is a Methodist, I know nothing of his private character. I cordially approve the Establishment, because I think it most agreeable to the Scriptures and primitive Christianity; and what is also most expedient. I think the points of difference with Dissenters are matters not affecting the essentials of religion. O mother, this poor despised cousin may, for aught I know, be a true disciple of Christ, with whom we may dwell for ever in glory; though I cannot but conceive him to be in a sad mistake in leaving the Church.

I have not time to spare, to add much more about interfering with the clerical office, &c. I should have written before this, some time,

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had I not been more engaged than I can well describe, with much office business, (several causes,) and latterly by a poor sick friend on a death-bed, who passed, I trust, from this world to the bosom of his Saviour, last Wednesday. A death-bed puts these things in their true light. At that time, my mother, my great fear was, lest I had been deceiving my own soul by not being zealous or faithful enough in my duty to God. F.'s business was a temporal matter: there it will ever be *my delight* to submit to you. O never imagine that I can be wicked enough to have a moment's displeasure against my parents; however I may differ in judgment, my heart must love them—my prayer, through grace, must be poured out for them.

I have been compelled, as it were, to say many things in self-justification, which I dislike very much. I had rather almost, if duty had permitted, have pleaded guilty to all your letter, and have left the whole to God.

Let me continue to have your prayers, dearest parents, as you have mine, and doubtless, if they be from the heart, the Lord will at length bring us to His glory, "for whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

In great haste, faithfully and affectionately yours,

EDWARD BICKERSTETH.

Three days after, on calmer consideration, though he felt he had written only truth, he feared he had expressed it in a manner too peremptory to be wholly consistent with filial duty; he therefore followed up his first letter by a second of apology and further explanation.

Hatton Court, Dec, 24, 1810.

MY DEAREST PARENTS,

My last letter was written in such haste (at my usual dinner time) that I have been uneasy since I wrote it, lest it should have been wanting both in that reverence and tender affection which is due to my beloved parents, and in that humility, meekness, and

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gentleness which becomes that holy religion I profess, and without which it is absurd to pretend to be a follower of a crucified Master. I am the more uneasy, as I recollect some expressions I would not now have used. My dearest parents, I need your forgiveness, not only for that letter, but for all the uneasiness I have caused you from my earliest childhood, many instances of which I can call to mind with deepest regret.

On the subject of your letter, on further consideration, and in the main, my opinion is not altered; but I had forgotten that you did not know all the circumstances of the case—that could you have been with me in all my doings, you would, I am persuaded, rather have approved of what I have done, and of the way in which it has been done.

If I had an opportunity, I would send you the printed rules of the Widows' Friend Society; it is chiefly supported by subscriptions, and is conducted by some young men, called members, whose piety must be unquestionable. Mr. Budd is the patron; the members pay 1s. per month, and are to find out proper objects; the aged and the sick with families are the chief objects we relieve. I was admitted a member a few months since, and having seen the good the Society has been made the instrument of, I could not conscientiously give it up. In general we go two at a time, that is, whenever we can. We meet the second Wednesday in every month, at a little after eight, to consider the cases; in general the relief is given weekly, and we are to go when, and as we have opportunity. O could you have seen the miserable cases of distress, could you have seen the gratitude of those relieved, could you have seen their thankfulness to the Father of all mercies, my beloved mother, what would you say of my heart if I could willingly resign this, for fear of reproach or the scandal of an evil world? No, mother, may we ever count the reproach of Christ in such cases as our highest riches.

In such a place as London, my valued minister, Mr. Budd, assures me it is quite impossible for the ministers to visit all their

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poor, and he thinks himself rather indebted to these young men for the good they do, and they are the means of pointing out cases to him, where his advice will be useful. I confess to you, there have been cases where I have found it would be improper for a man to visit. In these cases, some of the members have wives, and they are sent; and I would always endeavour to be cautious so to act, that our good may not be evil spoken of. I met with one of these cases, where I wished Miss B. to have gone; but I found she had exactly the same objections to the Society as my mother, springing, I am satisfied, from entire ignorance of its nature and design, and of the objects relieved. London is full of cases of silent distress, and people do not feign actual and pining misery, in places remote from public view, for the sake of the possibility of being hunted out; but no distress is relieved till we are satisfied it is real. I think now, dearest parents, I have said enough on this head. . . .

My mother, I speak not an idle tale; I know what it is to have a heavenly Father to go to in distress; I know something of the heavenly and delightful pleasure of prayer, when the heart is raised to God as a *present* Father of mercy, and God of all consolation; I know the comfort of reading the Scriptures, and the delightful and faithful promises, giving us a good hope of future glory. I cannot be surely deceiving myself here with a mock happiness, in a joy which I feel to be superior beyond comparison to every other joy. But do I boast of these things? O forgive me this once. My parents fear the Lord, and what says David? "O come hither *all ye* that fear the Lord, and I will tell you what HE hath done for my soul."

The world would doubtless call this enthusiasm; having never experienced anything of the kind, they have no idea of it; but should we be very anxious after the favour of this world, when we are assured its friendship is enmity with God?

I will confess my evil heart did feel something sore at your letter, and under this impression I am afraid I wrote mine to you, but further consideration has taught me, through the grace of God,

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to accept it as the greatest proof of kindness you could have given me, and to be satisfied you could not have written with more real affection; though you will see by this, I must, with humility, still differ from some of your conclusions.

Dearest mother, continue thus to be my guide and my guardian; thus to watch over all my ways; and may the grace of God ever incline me to open my heart freely to you, and to receive your tender admonitions in love, humility, and reverence, and ever to follow them as far as my conscience and His word will permit. I would not conceal anything, which I thought you ought to know. Here then I would say, with hesitation and diffidence, but possibly the idea is very unjust, that my parents have been most fearful of my principles, when they have been likely to expose me to suffering; but this is a part of the cost we must count upon, if we would be real Christians. The Christian life is a life of suffering: all that will be godly *must* suffer. "If we suffer with Christ we shall also reign with him." We must not expose ourselves unnecessarily, nor must we give up our duty or principle for fear of suffering. I shall through grace, I trust, be contented to be despised of all men, (if God call me thereto) for the name of Jesus, if I am thereby approved of God.

Gratefully and affectionately, one who at least desires to approve himself your dutiful son,

E. BICKERSTETH.

These letters produced much effect at home, and his mother withdrew her disapprobation of the Widows' Friend Society. "It greatly comforts me," he wrote, "that you do not now object to our little Society. I can never differ from you without pain." Again he wrote on the 18th of January, "Though I should not wish that my dearest friend should know half the evil thoughts of my heart, (indeed I am afraid sometimes to look at it myself,) yet I think I should not object to let my mother

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see the *whole* tenor of my actions. There are some things she might object to now, which I am persuaded she will not object to hereafter."

His father expressed a wish that he should devote more time to general reading. "I apprehend," he answered, "I do in some measure fulfil my father's desires as to reading, for instance I lately read the 'Lay of the Last Minstrel.' I am occasionally now reading Blair's Lectures on Rhetoric, but indeed my engagements are such, as to render it impossible for me to give much, or any regular time to this lighter species of knowledge. The part I have to act in this world, that is, present and immediate duties, take up a very large portion of my time. I do not despise, in their place, those studies my father mentions; they adorn life, but they must not push out actual duties. It is a positive duty to acquire a thorough knowledge of my Bible, and a thorough knowledge of my profession. It is a positive duty to visit the sick—to give a due time to devotion, religious exercises, and all the round of relative duties; these are the important parts I have to act in *this* world. I am persuaded we agree here, and be assured, my dear father, it is my earnest desire to fulfil the minutest wish you may express."

Though he was now so fully occupied with other business that his visits to the poor and afflicted implied a personal sacrifice, they were one of his great delights. "I find," he wrote in May, "my situation in the Spitalfields Benevolent Society (of which I sent you a printed account) very pleasant, and I hope profitable to me. I take care not to let it interfere with my business, and I am enabled to see some of the most wretched cases of distress I could have imagined, and in some happy cases

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the power of the grace of God eminently displayed in supporting his people under them. One poor aged woman told me, with a cheerful smile I shall never forget,—'I have found my God, a husband, a father, and a friend in every distress. I have been in great afflictions, but He has always been with me and supported me through them.' And this was a woman living on 4s. 6d. a week, in a room, whence she had not moved for six months, and for the greater part of that time confined to her bed, and obliged to have a nurse. I never felt the value of the blessings of food and clothing, and the necessity and importance of economy so much as I do now. I can assure you, sixpence would sometimes almost save a family from starving, as I know one case where it did."

In another letter he writes: "I can truly say, my labours in the Spitalfields' Society have been my meat and my drink; they have refreshed, strengthened, and gladdened my heart. I do hope also they have not been in vain. I trust, through the great goodness of God, some who have lived in careless unconcern, have been brought to read their bibles, go to church, and feel their need of a Saviour, and what has been equally gratifying, some dying Christians have been refreshed and strengthened. I feel that the grateful looks and thanks of these have comforted and cheered my own soul greatly. They have also been an additional stimulus to a life of piety in myself."

He felt strongly the solemn responsibility of the work. After giving, in a letter to a friend, an account of the dying bed of a careless sinner, whose conscience he could not arouse, he added, "I feel myself vastly incompetent for the task of speaking to such; and the words, 'his

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blood will I require at thy hands,' are very alarming, yet I dare not but visit." He also felt the danger to which the very success of his work exposed his own soul. "My God," he wrote, "has made me, I hope, an instrument of usefulness to others. O may His grace keep me in the depths of humility."

In the spring of this year there was a great pressure of work in the office. "We are at present," he wrote to his parents, "extremely busy: from about nine till near five this day, I suppose I was not two minutes together when I was not actually engaged in my work. I find heavy business a dangerous time for preserving the meek, humble, and composed frame of the Christian spirit and temper: it is much more difficult to restrain impatience and fretfulness, and an idea that you are of some consequence in the world, at such times than at others." In a letter to his sister Charlotte, he alludes to this pressure of occupation.

Hatton Court, May 30th, 1811.

MY DEAREST CHARLOTTE,

You know in our sad employment, we fatten on the miseries and distresses of others; the consequence of the recent distresses in trade has been a vast increase of business, and I am kept very closely at work, and yet am not able to keep it under—living in the quiet of the country, you can have no idea of the harassing bustle of London. Were it not that God has promised, "As our day is, so shall our strength be;" and that his grace never forsakes us in the path of duty, I should expect that all concern about salvation or eternity, would be banished; but though I hope it is not so, yet I cannot but think I suffer much from this pressure of business. O Sister, what a longing look I sometimes cast out after that heavenly world, where we shall enjoy the presence of our God, free from the

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curse of labour, and above all, the curse of sin—the dead in the Lord rest from their labours; blessed are they. I expect not ease or happiness in this world, I look not for it now. I expect every day to bring its cross and its labour, which I must take up patiently and cheerfully, and after all, I find troubles by far the most profitable of all the events that befal me. Praise puffs me up, and ruins me; success gives me self-conceit; ease and joy call forth levity and folly, but trouble solemnizes and composes my mind, leads my soul out in prayer to God, makes me dependent on him, humbles me, and increases my faith. Were it not for trouble, I should not have known half of what I now know, of the mercy, faithfulness, and overruling providence of God. I am sure to be delivered from any difficulty, if I find myself in the Spirit of prayer, in the midst of it, and have sometimes gone on my work, quite confident that all would go on well, and so I have found it. . . . When we plead guilty, Satan can say no more against us, that is the sum of his accusations—he cannot answer the argument, Christ died for the guilty, therefore he died for me; and the best way of resisting temptation is, to say in faith, my Saviour bled for me, how then can I do this for which he died.

The close of the same letter shows how his own experience of the blessedness of secret prayer, and his labours among the poor, prepared him to feel a deep interest in missions to the heathen.

Alas, I find sad distractions and wanderings in waiting upon God, not only in my business, but in my prayers also. The subject of my prayers, perhaps, suggests an idea foreign to them, which will carry me to another, and another, till I quite forget I am on my knees. O how different a prayer is this, to that, when one is enabled, by the Holy Spirit, in one continued flow of holy desires and praises, to pour out the whole heart before God, or earnestly to pant or long after some great blessing; then we feel we are close to God,—He is evidently with us and near to us, and only the veil of

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flesh prevents our seeing him. O what are all the painted, gaudy joys of the world, compared to this? But as these moments are happy, so are they indeed rare. We must often be content to wait upon God when he absents himself. I see occasionally a very interesting old woman about eighty, who quite delights me; she is an aged, experienced Christian, and talks with such cheerfulness and happiness of her death, (which is probably very near,) as greatly gratifies me. I have read to her, with such explanations as I could give, various practical parts of the Revelation: her eyes beamed with joy and gratitude on hearing again the glories and employment of the blessed, and I felt my own cold heart somewhat warmed in conversing with her. O that we could all live more to Christ, who has purchased such glories and blessings for us. We accustom ourselves too much to look at what he expects from us, rather than at the privileges he hath obtained for us, and therefore we love little and do little, and the world and its good things seem great in our eyes; but when we discover more of the unsearchable riches of Christ, all things else become tasteless and trifling. What a dead letter would the Bible be, what a blank would all creation be without Christ.

> People and realms of every tongue,
> Dwell on His love with sweetest song,
> And infant voices shall proclaim,
> Their early blessings on His name.

We ought earnestly to pray, that the Missionaries may have abundant success in spreading the savour of His name in every land; we have far too long been lukewarm and cold in his service.

Yours, &c.

E. BICKERSTETH.

Some extracts from Mr. Bickersteth's Journal will shew further, how lively a spirit of missionary zeal was this year kindled in his heart, and how he watched, lest even religious privileges should tempt him to neglect daily duties.

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"*May 4th.* I have many omitted mercies to note. On the 1st Friday in this month, was our Missionary Prayer Meeting, when we enjoyed much refreshment. On the 1st of May, I had the privilege of being present at the Bible Society's yearly meeting, for the first time, and never felt more highly animated. O what hath God wrought! I heard one of the four great missionary sermons, (the text Zech. xiv. 8.), and was refreshed, and comforted. The preacher said many things, which, after the thoughts I had had on the subject, were very applicable to me. Lord! do thou call, and by thy grace I will follow. This day I attended at seven in the morning, the Tract Society's Meeting, and heard interesting speeches from Mr. Legh Richmond, Mr. Roby, and Mr. Bogue, &c. And now, in this outward abundance of blessings, how is my heart with God? . . . .

"I see in these institutions the great importance of economy, that I may have to give to him that needeth. May the Lord pardon all my vain expences, and give me grace to deny myself for Christ.

"*May 19th,* 1811. We had last night at our society,* an interesting question discussed. How can we most extensively exert ourselves to promote the cause of Christ? I felt my heart much warmed and animated in the delightful subject, and hope I may thus be induced to exert myself more. I think I may appeal to my God, that if it pleased Him I should go, and He should make my way plain and clear, I am ready to go wherever He sends, I consider myself as devoted to this, and that it would be sacrilege to draw back if God should call; but

* The Saturday evening meeting at Mr. Budd's.

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O my God, give me! give me greater zeal, love, and devotion for Thee, and to Thee!

"*May* 24*th*, 1811. In relative duties, I have neglected that attention to the religion of the family, and prayer for its advancement, which is peculiarly incumbent on me, who have taken so many duties abroad upon me. I have also neglected due attention to my master's business in the office. The source of this has been pride under the name of zeal, which disregards plain obvious duties at home, to go to do something abroad. Is not this offering strange fire, and do not I deserve Nadab and Abihu's destruction?

"*July* 16*th*, 1811. I have been reading with much interest 'Buchanan's Christian Researches in Asia,' which, I hope, has opened a new scene to my mind, of the vast importance to Christianity, in the present day, of studying in every way to promote the gospel of Christ. By the grace of God, I will bend my soul more and more to this glorious end. I may do much more by self-denial. My Saviour died for me, and shall not I abstain from luxuries for his gospel? Last night, after twelve o'clock, my whole soul was poured out in earnest prayer for the spread of the gospel, for a blessing on the missionaries, and that I might be engaged in the work. I know not when I have had nearer access to God. I know that this prayer cannot be lost.

"*July* 28*th*, 1811. How many messengers of mercy does God send to my soul; yesterday, I had two sweet letters from Christian friends, which greatly turned my soul again to Christ. I felt revived also at our meeting, while we discussed, 'How shall we overcome besetting sins? I see clearly, while I have head-knowledge, and

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talk beyond my experience, others speak in simplicity, and are infinitely beyond me. O may I be admitted to Christ in heaven, even in the lowest seat!—to it, indeed, I have no title, but by free grace.

"Our next question is, what motives influence us in promoting the gospel? O may we find the presence and blessing of Christ, who knows all my heart, and may we desire to declare His love and glory.

"I see very clearly I could not bear that honour which is put upon some Christians. O may I be content to be unknown and despised, so that Christ be my glory and joy.

"It appears to me, from no further openings occurring in God's providence, and from the lowness and weakness of Christian grace in me, that it is not his will I should leave my present station. O my Father, I would commit all my way unto Thee, who knowest every difficulty, and canst foresee every result. May I so live that Thy will may be done by me, and Thy name glorified in me according to every talent given me, and every opportunity afforded me through Jesus Christ. Amen.

"*September 7th*, 1811. Prayer meeting on Friday, I had to lead in prayer. I was much dejected, and my soul continually raised to God for several days before, that he would be with me, and especially, just before I went, that he would give me a calm, recollected spirit. I never before experienced such self-possession, and such calm and earnest supplication together. My soul felt in a glow for the great cause of Missions. Here God evidently answered my prayer. I would be more earnest for the spirit of prayer, for I know that if he gives this, he will grant what he enables me to pray

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for. O my God, who knowest my heart, thou knowest, if it were Thy will, I am ready now to go, to proclaim the name of Jesus in distant lands; nay, that I should receive this as thy richest grace towards me: thou knowest all my longings for this, all my watchings for the leadings of thy providence in this, all my lookings-out for this: yet will I set me upon my watch-tower for this. I live too much in the bustle of the religious world. Communion with saints is necessary, but retirement and communion with Christ is still more so. I am too little alone with God. I find a kind of hypocrisy in religious conversation carried on too much, and that the flame of devotion is rather deadened than quickened by it, yet it is an unspeakable privilege.*

"*September* 15*th*, 1811. I bless God for the establishment of a Norwich Bible Society, which had my prayers. Every week I have to record, that God answers prayers.

"*October* 27*th*, 1811. I bless God for the establishment of a weekly Jewish Society at Mr. Budd's. It had my prayers before. May God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, make us a blessing and comfort to his people. How he makes use of the poorest instruments, that the excellency of the power may be seen to be His.

* Mr. Bickersteth felt so strongly the dangers to which even Christian society exposed him, that he wrote to ask his brother's advice on the subject. From him he received a letter urging him not so to extend his circle of acquaintance, or to devote so much time to them, as in any way to interfere with his immediate duties. "The comparisons in Scripture," he wrote, "always lead one to view life as a passing scene, in which Christians, as it were, meet, bid one another God speed, and haste away in the course prescribed them. The full benefit of communion and intercourse is reserved for a future period, and I think that even our religious friends may be the means of our flagging in our Christian course; as, when the man of God loitered under the oak, he was exposed to temptation, but you are not ignorant of Satan's devices, and I trust will not be ensnared by them."

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Mr. Bickersteth deeply valued the ministry of Mr. Pratt and Mr. Budd. "It is this," he wrote to his parents, "with the quiet I can have in my own room, which makes me enjoy the Sunday in London, more than I can do any where else. I get thus somewhat into the meaning of those words, in which we are directed to call the Sabbath, a delight, a shadow and type of heaven. It is really something like coming down from heaven to earth on the Monday morning, but there remaineth a rest, a perpetual Sabbath for the people of God." The Societies with which he was connected, brought him into more intimate acquaintance with Mr. Budd. "This, I can assure you," he writes, "I feel no common privilege, for the more I see of him, the more I see the excellent graces Christ has given him for the good of his Church. It is pleasant to have union of soul in any respect with such a man, and I learn to correct my principles by his better judgment."

The following letter to his brother, also tells of the Missionary feelings which filled his soul.

MY BELOVED BROTHER,

I am grateful for your affectionate letter, which is more valuable as you have so little time to spare. It is a happy frame of mind, to be enjoying the spiritual life in vigour, and surely, next to this, it is happy to be thirsting and longing for this state; in one case faith seems in exercise, in the other, repentance and humility. . . . . We have, neither of us, anything in ourselves, and the only good we have, is what Christ gives us; thence arises the great importance of fervency in secret duties. Often, especially at night, I have gone like a log of wood, (if I may so speak,) to the throne of grace, hardly able to utter a word, and then acknowledging my

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wretchedness, I have received grace, to have communion with God in fervent prayer. Yet, does it not often happen, that we enjoy more fellowship in public services than private? The Lord loveth the gates of Sion, more than all the dwellings of Jacob; He is peculiarly in the midst of His holy temple; no wonder then we are often more animated and fervent there, than alone. The promise is also peculiar, where two or three are gathered together, there am I to bless them. Oh! how is this promise often realized! We have, at Mr. Budd's, a Missionary Prayer Meeting once a month, and I have really there felt a happiness I cannot describe, and an earnest panting after the salvation of the heathen, and of all mankind, which seemed something like the pleading of Israel, that would hardly take a denial. I cannot but here think upon and mourn the coldness and lukewarmness of what I esteem the purest Church of Christ. Baptists, Moravians, Dissenters, Methodists, nay, even Roman Catholics, do more to spread the Gospel than we. I have longed that this reproach should be rolled away from our Church. It must be done by fervent prayer, continued prayer, and united prayer. But I am wandering from the subject of your letter. I do believe, the more time, (with due attention to other duties,) we give to private prayer, and social, when we can have it, the more our souls will prosper. Our beloved Lord has here given a most delightful example, in retiring all night for prayer, in the midst of His most urgent engagements. It is also a happy privilege, that when we cannot retire to our chamber, we can pray, and perhaps more fervently too, in our walks. This is indeed walking with God, and living in the Spirit. It is the only mid-day prayer I can have, and though I am often interrupted in it, and often obliged to omit it, yet I find it a great privilege thus to go in the Spirit to a throne of grace.

Your account of Miss B—— is pleasing, though I always knew her bountiful mind. I have always felt a difficulty in being candid and open with Miss B——, as I can be with you or other fellow-Christians. I hope I can truly say, I esteem her as a valuable

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Christian in most difficult circumstances, I love her very sincerely as a decided and faithful Christian, in the midst of peculiar trials; yet there is a coldness and distance in her manner to me, which is somewhat forbidding. I can readily conceive and admit, that I deserve this, and a great deal more than this, and that if she knew me more, she would despise me more. I have also found it very profitable to me, when I have been made in any measure useful to others, and almost overpowered by their gratitude and love, so as to be puffed up; it has been useful in humbling me, to be treated coldly by a sincere and excellent Christian. I know, also, it is the continual plan of Satan to make use of little things, to divide and separate the people of Christ. It is, as I have seen, if I may say so, his continual aim, and too often his fatal success. Hence the reiterated command of mutual love; and knowing this, I can say, no person has had my prayers more fervently for every temporal and spiritual blessing. I thought it right to lay open my mind to you here. Indeed I would always wish you should have the keys of my heart, because I have unbounded confidence in your judgment and affection. . . . United in Christ and in brotherly love.

Believe me, most truly yours,

E. BICKERSTETH.

W. W. Carus Wilson, Esq., of Casterton Hall, Kirkby Lonsdale, was a most valuable friend to Mr. Bickersteth in his earlier years. The weight of his influence, which was very considerable, was all thrown into the scale of true piety. His approval contributed much to re-assure the minds of Mr. Bickersteth's parents, when they thought their son in danger of religious enthusiasm. Mr. Wilson's eldest son was one of his most intimate friends, and a deeply spiritual correspondence was carried on between them, but the limits of this memoir will not allow of its insertion. To this friend he thus describes a deathbed-scene he had been called on to witness.

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"I have been with a poor friend on a death-bed, who, I trust, is now with the Lord. The case is somewhat remarkable. About ten days before his death, he was quite unconcerned about salvation; but when he saw death approach, the Lord affected his heart with an awful sense of his danger; he began to be very anxious about his soul, sent for a minister, and last Friday sent for me. I have been a good deal with him since, and have reason to hope he was saved, as a monument of divine mercy. I dare not speak with certainty, but he seemed to see himself so vile, that he was and must be saved so entirely through Christ,—that he should hardly dare to appear before his Redeemer: he seemed so anxious for his brothers and sisters, that I trust indeed we may have a good hope of him. The only thing I doubted was, he did not seem to have so broken a spirit as one would have expected in his case. He was very young—about twenty-four. He died on Wednesday, about two hours after I had left him. What a lesson to us! 'Be ye also ready!' O that the Lord may fix it deep in my cold, hard, and insensible heart! Some of his sayings, I trust, I shall never forget. A soul on the borders of eternity sees another world in its just, near, and visible colours. May we have grace to give more time, and that our best time, to prayer which will be heard."

Mr. Bickersteth continued to be a spiritual guide and teacher to his sisters: his own view of Christian correspondence may be seen in some expressions taken from a letter written at a somewhat later period. "Could we, my dear Mary, write with much prayer, and a decided determination to promote each other's spiritual welfare: could we write such letters as, if I may say so, we shall

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count it a pleasure to read even in heaven—then I know our correspondence would be quite a means of grace to our souls, and so far from being lost time, it would be one means of redeeming the time." To this sister, who appears to have been passing through a time of some spiritual depression, he wrote the following letter.

May 28, 1811.

MY BELOVED SISTER,

I sit down with great pleasure to answer your last. If I can be of any use in directing or comforting your mind in any way, I cannot be more delightfully employed. We are all poor helpless sinners, but our heavenly Father enables us, in His great goodness, to assist and strengthen each other. May He himself comfort, refresh, and revive your heart in His ways, which are the only ways of peace and happiness. Many are the afflictions of His people, but He delivereth them out of all; this I have daily experienced, and therefore I will be glad and rejoice in Him. Christ is an everflowing fountain of happiness, at which we may still drink, and often the draughts are the sweetest when worldly trouble is the greatest; but we are perverse and rebellious children, and vex his Holy Spirit by our pride and our lusts. I feel with you, my dear sister, nothing is more dangerous than sleepiness and indolence in the ways of God; if it is permitted to grow, it generally ends in a dangerous fall. One great way of checking it is by keeping closer to closet duties, to self-examination, reading the Bible, and prayer. Let me add also here, the duty of fasting, if your health will bear it; if you do but set apart one day in a month, or still more, in a week, to fasting, that is, to abstinence from your usual indulgences, and greater retirement with God, you will, I am persuaded, find it a great help to increase your devotion to God. I would also add meditation; but this is one thing in which I have been very negligent, though I have experienced great benefit, when I have been enabled to set apart half an hour

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to this. I am best able to do it in my walks, by taking a text to think upon. In London, from my acquaintance with some excellent persons, I have the benefit of social prayer occasionally, and find it very reviving. But after all, we must look far beyond the means; they must be used, but they will do nothing of themselves, all must be built on Christ; all life, energy, and power, must be derived from Him; we must be in Him as a stone in a building, as a branch in the vine, as a limb in the body, as Noah in the ark, as the man-slayer in the city of refuge, as a soldier in a fortress, (and in various other ways it is represented) before we can have stability, growth, life, and security. May we then thus win Christ, and be found in Him, not having our own righteousness! There is much self-righteousness in our doubts and fears; and we lose a vast deal of comfort, not only by loose and careless walking with God, but by the great sin of unbelief in the all-sufficiency of Christ, whereby we do indeed especially dishonour God. My dear sister, I know, needs not to be told, we have a mighty enemy to grapple with, who is continually seeking to destroy our souls; the world, with its usual consistency, laughs at this, but the Christian daily finds it to be true. Now if he can tempt us to doubt about, or disbelieve the plain meaning of our Bibles, he gains every point he wants, and indeed I am persuaded he does keep us all in great unbelief of the word of truth. Did we indeed believe hell and heaven, and judgment—did we indeed believe that God took our nature upon Him to save our souls, we could not possibly trifle as we do; but having firmly fixed in our minds the truths of our Bible, let us reject every doubt, as coming from the father of lies, and polluting and ruining our souls, if it be entertained for a moment. We should have a simplicity of design in reading the sacred volume, to be made wise unto salvation. Innumerable difficulties there are, which are not resolved or explained by the Bible. Its great design is, to save the souls of those who will submit to be taught by it. Many things are left just as they were before the Bible was given. Many things even angels cannot fathom, they desire to look into them.

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That there will be a future punishment is clear almost without Revelation; first, because we see sin now in some cases punished, and therefore it is not inconsistent with the mercy of God to punish sin; and secondly, because the wicked are often in prosperity all their lives, while the righteous are in great trouble; therefore, if God be just, there must be future retribution. But, beloved sister, we may know all mysteries, yet not know the love of Christ in our hearts. O let us study this lesson, let us think of what Christ has done, is now actually doing, and will do hereafter for us; let us think how near He is to us; let us learn to hold communion with Him, to talk to Him, to abide with Him, till our hearts burn, our countenances glow with love, to Him and to man. We hardly, I think, believe that He who was once on earth in human form, is now again always with us. "Through faith we see Him that is invisible." O may He see us burning with a holy zeal in his cause! but ah! what poor, what cold, what heartless lives we lead! Do we indeed live at all to Him? yet He died for this very end, that we should live no longer to ourselves, but to Him. Soon, however, we shall live to Him. These heavenly days remind me of that serener sky, where, free from sin, I shall behold Emmanuel. Already I see the distant shore. I behold the holy city, having the glory of God. There is all that I can desire; thither are gone many dear friends, there I hope to meet many of those now so justly dear to me. What want I more? God is there, my portion, my joy, my happiness, and "in His presence is fulness of joy." Animated with these hopes, what is the pageant of this world? Yet, alas! though I would thus rejoice in the Lord, a few moments compel me to lie low in the dust, for my iniquities prevail against me; yet Christ hath delivered me, and will yet deliver me. To Him be glory. . . May God's presence be with you, my dear sister, I cannot wish you more.

Ever most affectionately yours,

E. BICKERSTETH.

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CHAPTER VIII.

MARRIAGE, AND SETTLEMENT AT NORWICH.

A. D. 1811—1812.

In childhood Mr. Bickersteth had been considered cold and reserved, but religion had awakened the best and gentlest feelings of his heart; he now delighted in social converse, and domestic joys entered into all his schemes of earthly happiness. "As soon as I am able," had been his resolution in forming a plan of life (1808), "I will marry, and the great thing I will seek in a wife, shall be a Christian temper." When introduced, in 1809, to the family of his intimate friend, Thomas Bignold, he felt that in his eldest sister he had met with all that he had desired; but he thought that many years must elapse, before he should be in circumstances to propose a union with her. In the autumn of 1811, his friend, talking with him about their proposed partnership, found that his mind was set on a still closer connection, and urged him to make his wishes known. With the filial deference which had always marked him, his first step was to obtain the consent of his own parents, and then, of hers. "I cannot at all act," he wrote, "without the advice and concurrence of my parents; this I should wish to have in all things, but especially in such important changes as those before

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me. The principal grounds of the union are, I trust, because I am persuaded Sarah is one who fears God, a meek and humble Christian, whose disposition seems to unite with my own, in desiring to give ourselves unreservedly to Him who died for us. You know, beloved parents, I have long felt a disposition to marry, and the meaning of those words, "It is not good for man to be alone.' I now beg the favour of your considering the matter, and advising. I shall be guided by your advice; I cannot act contrary to it. I would, I trust, sacrifice my nearest and dearest wishes to parents, who have so long proved that they are worthy of my highest confidence and love, and that they only seek my true happiness. Should you not approve of my designs, nothing more shall be said upon it, for I have not at all communicated my sentiments to Sarah, though I have expressed a high esteem and affection for her."

While he consulted his earthly parents, he strove also to bring every wish into subjection to the will of his heavenly Father.

"*November* 11*th*, 1811. A prospect of a settlement in life, both in business and in marriage, has opened before me, and I have written to consult my parents. The matter has also been left before the throne of grace, and I have sought guidance from above. Here alone, short-sighted as I am, can I leave anything with comfort, and I would say unreservedly to my God, 'If it be Thy will, hasten and accomplish it; if it be contrary thereto, frustrate it. If I could in any other way be more an instrument of Thy glory, lead me in that way. Yet I find my heart wayward, my affections earthly, my faith weak and feeble.

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"*December* 1*st*, 1811. I fear I have much sinned against God, in desiring this settlement too eagerly, in seeking and praying for it too earnestly. I have said, 'Let Thy will be done,' but I have felt an eager desire, Let *my* will at any rate or expense be done.

"*December* 6*th*. This morning, after a hard struggle and many tears, I was enabled, I trust, in sincerity, to resign my own will to Christ, and to say, O my Saviour, let thy will entirely be done, either in the granting or the refusing of my desires; yet I tremble to think of my wishes being frustrated, but I am in the hands of Him who is touched with the feeling of my infirmities; neither would I wish for any other resting-place."

The only obstacle in his path was his engagement with Mr. Bleasdale; the years for which he was articled had expired, but he had pledged himself to remain two years longer in his service. He laid his wishes before that gentleman, representing his own desire to settle in Norwich, and the state of his friend's business, which required the immediate assistance of a partner. "I must," he wrote to his future father-in-law, "sacrifice pleasure to principle, and therefore must obey Mr. B——'s wishes, which I have some fear may be against me. I am persuaded we shall not lose any real happiness, in strictly abiding by every honourable engagement, and that by this I shall give the best pledge, that I shall be faithful and affectionate in those I wish now to take upon me." After some delay, which to his eager temperament was a trial of faith and patience, Mr. Bleasdale consented to his wishes; he left his service in the middle of April, and was married at St. Peter's Church, Norwich, by his

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brother John, on the 5th of May, which had been his parents' wedding-day.

During the months which intervened between his engagement and his marriage, he carried on a constant and very frequent correspondence. These letters will best show the state of his mind at the time. Personal feeling would lead her to whom they were addressed, entirely to suppress them, but a strong sense of duty, to withhold nothing which may illustrate the grace of God in her beloved husband, has made her consent willingly to the insertion of the following extracts.

Hatton Court, Nov. 26, 1811.

The free and unreserved communication of our sentiments is now what we have, in some measure, a title to claim from each other. I shall therefore always now with pleasure impart my whole mind to you. What I have for some time made, in principle, at least, the two main objects of my life, are, the attainment of personal holiness, and the widest diffusion of the gospel of Jesus that my means and talents will afford. I endeavour to bring these two principles into daily life and business. The word of God is the standard by which I regulate them. I take these two principles from the conviction that, on a death-bed, it would give me the most satisfaction that I had made them the two main points of attention; but then in the pursuit of these I find my own sin and weakness, and the absolute necessity of dependence on Jesus, that He is indeed the Alpha and Omega of all my hopes, and all my strength.

I do look forward, my Sarah, to our fireside evenings with much pleasure; I trust in them we shall often be brought near to God, and while we enjoy communion with one another, we shall also have fellowship with Jesus, and find our hearts burning with a sense of His love, His presence, and His goodness; we shall animate each other to be more stedfast and unmoveable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord, and comfort each other in every trouble.

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. . . My principles as to income have been, to have no debts, always paying, where practicable, ready money; to live a certain sum yearly within my income (though, dependent as I have been on my father for the last five years, I have not acted on the last) and to give a certain portion in charity. I am persuaded we shall agree on these principles, which all seem justified or required by the Scriptures, and calculated to give us comfort. They will indeed require self-denial in some things, but they will afford us many sources of gratification in others. I should like, also, always to enter into the full meaning of the words, "Use hospitality without grudging," and gladly to welcome all those who are dear to us to our home.

I am anxious, my love, to state these things fully and freely, that we may be as well acquainted with each other as circumstances will allow, before we come together. I trust you will ever find me ready, through grace, to bow to the authority of Scripture, and anxiously desirous of promoting your ease, comfort, and happiness; and indeed our Christian principles are our best security that we shall live in harmony and affection.

I take down now, regularly, notes of Mr. Budd's and Mr. Pratt's sermons, looking forward to the time when I hope we shall read them together. The chief thing I shall regret in leaving London will be leaving such men as Mr. Budd and Mr. Pratt, and some other most dear Christian friends; but then I look forward to others at Norwich. . . . I shall be very glad to be intimate with Christian friends, and to enter the Norwich religious societies, because I have found it one great means of maintaining religion in my own heart.

You have, ever since our connection was in more immediate contemplation, had my continual and fervent prayers, that God would abundantly bless you temporally and spiritually, keep you from all evil, and fill you with His Holy Spirit, and with joy and peace in Jesus; that He would make our connection a blessing to us both, and a means of increasing our love to Him, and our ardour in His service. I am satisfied that I have yours also, and I would beg

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them especially for this, that my mind may not be too much fixed on earthly prospects, or earthly good, but rather set on things above. I have not time to add more.

Believe me always

Your truly affectionate and faithful

E. BICKERSTETH.

November 29, 1811.

. . . . It shall, through grace, be the aim of my life, that we may go together in the path to eternal glory. Our united and our family prayers, our mutual converse, and our whole life, by the mercy of God, shall have this grand point in view. I trust to learn from my Sarah many heavenly dispositions, and to follow her as she does Christ.

I trust all our plans will be formed and executed in prayer. I cannot have comfort in setting about any thing, without seeking for the direction and assistance of our heavenly Father, and I am sure we shall find prayer more a privilege than a duty.

It shall be my study, through grace, also to deserve your whole confidence, and unreservedly to give you mine, so that we may never have two interests or two wishes different from each other. I am satisfied, united as we are in principle and affection, we shall find no difficulty in this, and we shall find the comfort of it continually. How close and how dear is our union! How immense the affection I ought to have for you: "Husbands love your wives, *even as Christ also loved the church.*" O how shall I be able without your prayers to fulfil this, though I have so many motives urging me to do it? I was pleased with the following account of marriage in the beginning of one of the Homilies: "It is instituted of God, to the intent that man and woman should live lawfully in a perpetual friendship; to bring forth fruit, that the Church of God and His kingdom might be preserved and enlarged." Ours then, will be a perpetual friendship. Death may separate us, but not end our friendship.

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I am afraid I am fixing my affections too much on this life. I know God may yet frustrate every wish, and therefore I would endeavour to sit loose to earthly happiness, knowing we never run greater risk of losing it, than when we prize it too highly. But after all, I would not form visionary prospects, nor expect an unclouded day of bliss in a pilgrimage through a foreign land, however dear, however pleasant, the companions I have with me. As a proof of God's love, we must have trouble and chastening; but then the storm shall only prevent our delay and indolence on the road, and hasten us to the Jerusalem which is above; where we shall have no more trouble, but sorrow and sighing shall for ever flee away.

The following letter, December 6th, 1811, may be considered as a compendium of his whole system of family life, for from the principles here stated he never intentionally swerved.

I will now mention some general plans of usefulness which have been on my mind: though I find I continually fail in my plans and resolutions, yet I am satisfied, if I did not form them, I should do still less than I do; by acting on system much more may be done, and by aiming high we may accomplish something, ever recollecting that in ourselves we can do nothing.

My first desire is, that we should be a household fearing and serving God, mutually watching with a holy jealousy over each other, with meekness and affection pointing out each other's faults. This is a faithfulness we must study to attain, and not only so, but study to promote and forward every holy temper and disposition in each other. This as to ourselves; as to our family, it should be our aim and endeavour, that those who serve us should first be servants of Jesus, and that we should be kindly considerate, first of their spiritual good, and then of their ease and comfort with us. If God should give us children, it will be our continual prayer

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that they may be His by adoption and grace. The regulation of the family I cannot leave in better hands than yours, and in business I shall have peculiar motives for attention, diligence, and fidelity. Your approbation and happiness, and the affection and esteem of our dear T——, my character in the world as a Christian, and the peace and comfort of my own mind, will all constrain me not to be slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. Much of our usefulness will depend upon our own temper, conduct, and character. To be religious without gloom, pious without austerity, always contented, calm, cheerful, and happy. If the world about us see this, they must inquire what principle produces these effects; and our light will so shine before men, that they will see our good works, and glorify God.

My next desire is for the benefit, temporal and spiritual, of our respective families; for them I trust we shall pour out many fervent and united prayers, and never cease our desires and endeavours for their good, till we have all one heart, one mind, one spirit, one hope, one future home and glory. Here we shall have many exercises of faith, of self-denial, and of patience. But, in the strength of our Lord, we will persevere against all difficulties, and never give up our hopes. And while we seek their spiritual prosperity, we cannot but be desirous that they should be happy in their temporal affairs; for Christianity expands and softens the mind, and renders it kind and moderate, compassionate and full of love, to all around us. It is my continual prayer, that I may be an instrument of good in the family to which I am going.

The poor will next claim our attention; they are the representatives of Jesus, their wants he considers as his own—good done to them as to himself; I trust, then, they will often occupy our thoughts, our conversation, and our exertions. Indeed I shall not be well satisfied with that week in which we do not see, and in a measure help some. When together, we shall be able to form plans for doing this most effectually and wisely, and especially for spreading among them the knowledge of Jesus and His great

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salvation, and bringing them to experience the blessedness of those who believe his glorious Gospel, I humbly hope also to be instrumental in doing good among the Societies to which your brother belongs, at the same time that I am myself receiving the most important benefits. I have by experience found such advantage, I trust, from them, that I shall gladly and gratefully join and promote them, as much as lies in my power. I think few more important than the Sunday School Societies, or more delightful and useful than the Bible Society and Missionary prayer-meetings. As members of society, and housekeepers, our character will always have some degree of weight and influence; this will increase by consistency of conduct; all men have some influence on those they live with. It will be our aim, then, to throw the whole weight of our influence into the scale of religion, and on the side of the gospel. Our conversation, our ability, our knowledge, our judgment and discretion, must all be used for the benefit of those around us; and especially in all things we must have the law of kindness on our lips. We will give all our support to the good, and restrain and discountenance, as much as in our power lies, every sin in others. These things I say generally, but particular occasions of usefulness will arise, and demand particular exertion. In so uncertain and changing a world, there will ever be new trials and difficulties, and also new opportunities of doing good.

And now the prospect of these things (and I have mentioned but few) while they show us how much is to be done, need not dishearten us, for as our day is, so shall our strength be; that which we sow, we shall also reap: and the Lord himself is on our side,—He is our strength and our helper, our confidence and our exceeding great reward. He himself will guide us here by His counsel,—He himself will afterwards receive us to His glory.

O what prospects does our Bible open to us; may we realize and enjoy them in lively faith and assured hope, and blessed be the name of our God for ever and ever!

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After Mr. Bleasdale had consented to shorten his engagement with him, he wrote:

Dec. 10, 1811.

Here are all my doubts, and fears, and difficulties, done away beyond all my expectation. We were enabled to leave them in the hand of God, and He answered our prayers. May we then, like David, love the Lord who hath heard our supplications, and thus given us, by experience and evidence, a means by which we may be enabled to overcome every difficulty and trouble into which we may hereafter be brought, who has thus given us fresh ground of confidence and consolation. To Him be thanks and praise through Jesus for ever! It is a comfort to me, Sarah, that we are still *only* dependent on this kind Father for the completion of all our wishes, that we are His by adoption into His family, and that He delights over us to do us good. Those things which seem contrary to us, are but to endear His mercies the more, and so it shall be through life; for this is the grand and general course of his Providence, and all the sorrows and troubles we meet in this world will make the future glory we expect more delightful and perfect. O what happiness does the Gospel of Jesus afford! O that all were partakers of its blessings!

Dec. 14, 1811.

MY BELOVED SARAH,

. . . . I am happy to tell you that, if it please God, I shall see you at Christmas. . . . . May we meet with Paul's spirit. Rom. i. 11, 12. . . . .

T——'s note was most gratifying. Suffolk has done nobly; I trust they are doing great things at Cambridge also.* The word of the Lord, like a mighty racer, shall have free course, run, and be glorified. The Lord is preparing the way, and not a word spoken for Him, not a prayer offered up in His cause, not a tract

* The allusion is to exertions making at this time for the Bible Society.

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given away, not a Bible dispersed for His sake, shall lose its effect, or its abundant reward. We shall see the fruit of these things *now*, and we shall reap an incalculably more abundant harvest in the last great day, when all these things shall be owned and abundantly recompensed. Jesus expects great things from His people now, and they are saying to Him, "Gird thee with thy sword (see Eph. vi. 17) on thy thigh, O thou most mighty, with thy glory and majesty, and in thy majesty ride prosperously because of the word of *truth*, of meekness, and of righteousness." There are peculiar blessings promised to the Word of God, and we see some of them fulfilling in our day. This is a delightful subject, and I trust will often gladden our hearts when we get together.

You talk of my having a dreary journey. I do not know what my journey back may be, but I am sure a journey to see you will not be a dreary or a fatiguing one, though it were much further than to Norwich. I enjoy the thought of it exceedingly.....

Believe me, with sincerest affection,

Your ever faithful,

E. BICKERSTETH.

Jan. 15, 1812.

It is my joy and my comfort, that my Sarah is both dear in nature and dear in grace. Dear in nature, O how dear! what love can be stronger! My future constant, constant companion, joy, and comfort: the idea that we shall live together seems almost too great a blessing to be real. And then, dear in grace, O how dear! my sister and fellow-heir in glory, my fellow-pilgrim here, my immortal friend. Words fail to convey the meaning which these ideas inspire and communicate; but we know, my love, religion justifies and sanctifies our affection, and gives us hopes and prospects which our most enlarged conceptions cannot fathom; for the heart of man cannot conceive what God hath prepared for them that love Him.

Feb. 13, 1812.

I am thankful that you have met with a house. O may our

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house be a house of prayer and of praise! May an altar there be erected to our God, from which this morning and evening sacrifice may continually ascend; thus, when our earthly tabernacle fails, we shall have a building of God, an house not made with hands, but a mansion prepared by Jesus, eternal in the heavens.

Feb. 27, 1812.

He is *our* God, and this is a nearer tie to us than every other. He is ours in a thousand relations and a thousand blessings, and He himself is our rich reward and our chief joy. I think I mentioned to you in a former letter three remaining difficulties which I had committed to Him: a house—the furnishing of it—and the time of leaving Mr. B. You yourself, my love, see how He who giveth liberally, and upbraideth not, (O how much I deserved that upbraiding) has removed them all—has heard and answered every prayer. My song shall always be of Him—yes, unto thee, O Lord, will I sing. I make it my earnest prayer, that His goodness may constrain us to give ourselves unreservedly unto Him; and in the various scenes of our future life, if He spare our lives, to set our faces as a flint against all sin, and to walk worthy of our high and heavenly vocation. It is the continual feeling of my heart, I serve a good Master, who blesses me, though an unworthy servant; who, I am persuaded, looks with approbation on our union, and will make it a blessing to us, both temporally and spiritually, both here and hereafter.

A circumstance, which occurred not long after his engagement, afforded him fresh proof of the watchful care with which his heavenly Father provided for all his wants. At the request of some personal friends, he had frequently visited an aged relative of theirs;—had led him to attend a Gospel ministry, and had been made a great spiritual blessing to him. He attended his dying-bed. "I hope," he wrote, "I was made an

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instrument of some good ;—he seemed to accept my help with gratitude, and I prayed with him daily. He was in much composure of mind the night before he died." Then, mentioning that the relatives were in town, and that all seemed satisfied with the will, he added, to his parents, " And here, I may tell you, I feel grateful on another account, that Mr. —— did not make a second will, in which I believe he purposed to have left me a legacy : this would have given a tinge and aspect to my attentions, which would have distressed me exceedingly. O my parents, what continual reasons I have for gratitude to that heavenly Master I serve, who ordereth all things for me !" Such were his own feelings, but his liberal friends would not let the matter drop here. Influenced, either by a knowledge of their aged relative's intention, or by their own grateful sense of the attention he had paid him in his last hours, as well as of the assistance he had rendered in some legal business, they placed in his hands a draft for £200. He declined it at once, without looking at the sum, but was so strongly urged to accept it, that he consented. When he found how large the amount was, he became uneasy. " Having," he wrote again to his parents, " an opportunity of seeing Mr. Budd in the evening, I consulted with him what I ought to do. After I had mentioned all the circumstances, he said, 'Take it, and consider it as a gift from God; you are going to be married, and it will be very useful to you ; if you like to give part of it as a mark of thankfulness to God, do so, but it is not necessary.' I still however thought it better, at any rate, to offer that the sum should be greatly reduced, but Mr. —— positively declined this, and I have therefore received it. How grateful I ought

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to be to the Father of mercies, for this most unexpected goodness ; and my dearest parents will, I am sure, approve of my giving £20 to the relief of such distress as I am acquainted with, as a token of this gratitude. I have set apart this, as the greatest enjoyment I could have. How wonderful have been the late mercies of God to me! I pray that my heart may be affected, and overflow with gratitude for such undeserved blessings."

This season of mercy was not without its special temptations. His watchful mother had warned him against them. "Amidst my present prospects," he writes, "I feel the importance and the kindness of my mother's observation, that I should not be led to neglect Mr. Bleasdale's business. Duty and gratitude call upon me for attention to this, and I pray that I may have grace to be diligent in his business, yet fervent in Spirit, serving Christ." He did, however, at one time, incur his master's displeasure, and the following entry in his daily journal shows how deeply he humbled himself, under a sense of the neglect which occasioned it.

"*January* 16*th*, 1812. I have to make another memento of known, wilful, and deliberate sin, and I desire to take all the shame of it, and to feel such compunction as may be a powerful stimulus to hinder me from repeating it.

"My conscience has long been accusing me of neglecting Mr. B——'s business, and this day he spoke to me upon it in private.

"O how I felt all he said! I could say but little—that I was obliged to him for the candid way in which he had spoken to me—that I trusted he would not have reason to speak again.

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"And now I would let conscience speak plainly all my sin. I have been disobedient to my master, and cheating him of that time he has purchased and paid for; and this, against the checks of my conscience, against the express exhortation of my mother, and contrary to the plain word of God. And all this is but a small part of my sin. I have made a profession of strict religion, Mr. B—— knows this, and attributes my neglect of his interests to my religion. O how then have I become an offence in his way, a dishonour to my Master in heaven! my sacramental vows are all broken. I am become one of those wretched characters, who say, and do not.

"Yet there is time, by the mercy of God, to retrieve my character. O holy, and merciful God, give me grace to be zealous and repent, for Jesus Christ's sake, Amen.

"*January* 17*th*. I thought it best this morning, plainly and simply to confess to Mr. B-——, that, on considering what had been said, I certainly had been guilty of neglecting his business, and this at a time when there was very much to do, and he had been showing me a great kindness. He answered, "Well, let us not mention it again."

In March he took a journey of business with Mr. A—— Mr. Bleasdale's partner, to Exeter and Okehampton, as witness in an important cause which interested the whole county of Devon. Here his energies were called into full play; he speaks in one letter, of working from seven in the morning till twelve at night; and in another he writes, "I talked of labour in Hatton Court, but it was little to what I have had here; but I thank God my health keeps good, and I am only what they call, in this country, mazed; made somewhat stupified by it. I dictated

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to five clerks at one time, and wrote myself whilst I dictated.

"I cannot but regret the loss of spiritual advantages here, and my mind is often, nay, generally, too dead and cold to derive spiritual improvement from earthly employment. Doubtless this would be the happiest state of our mind, if, whatever we were engaged in, whether in active business, or eating or drinking, we could do all to the glory of God; but I fear this is a perfection we shall only completely attain hereafter, and therefore shall never, here, be completely happy." On the same journey Mr. A—— expressed his sense of the services Mr. Bickersteth had rendered, him during the time he was at New Inn, and gave him a proof of his esteem, by undertaking to see himself that the business in Hatton Court was not neglected, that he might be sooner at liberty to leave London for Norwich.

Many pleasant associations had to be broken, when Mr. Bickersteth parted from his Christian friends in London. "I shall feel some pangs," he wrote to Miss Bignold, "in breaking the ties which bind me here. I found this in leaving some of my poor this day. I could stand every thing but their blessings and prayers. But, in every state I find it my comfort, love, to have this plain direction before me; 'This is the way, walk ye in it.' Far different prospects occupied my mind, when I thought of the ministry, but the way there was barred and shut up, and here it has been made plainer and plainer every step. I am satisfied it is the will of God I should walk in it, and therefore I rejoice to proceed; and I am persuaded, I can as much serve Him who gave Himself for me, and pursue my two grand points of personal holiness, and the widest diffu-

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sion of the Gospel in my power, in this way, as in the way I had first thought of. We must set our standard of holiness high, even the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, and never rest till we attain it; it will increase our humility, at least, and by patient continuance in well-doing, no doubt we may be greatly instrumental in making the Gospel known, loved, and obeyed. I am only afraid of myself, of a corrupt heart too easily conformed to a world lying in wickedness, with the seeds of all the same evils which are in the world. How important the precept—keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life! and how delightful the thought, that Christ does preserve and keep us as a tender and kind shepherd!

He was very anxious to introduce his wife, as soon as they were married, to the home of his childhood, and to his beloved parents. "My affection for my parents," he assured his mother, "never can be diminished by any change of circumstances. I am too deeply indebted to them; and they have too long been the most kind and affectionate of friends and advisers, to let me ever forget them, or ever cease to give that unlimited confidence which I trust they have always had, and from which I have derived so much comfort." The feelings with which he looked forward to his visit to Kirkby, are thus expressed in a letter.

"*May* 2, 1812. The time now draws very near for our setting off, and for my again meeting my dearest parents. I am anxious that we should pass our time as usefully as we can, whilst we are together, as it is very probable we shall very seldom be so much together again; and I find there is no comfort in looking back at past actions, but

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as we have been enabled to be zealous in doing good. It would be delightful, if we could always have this thought upon our minds—What can I now do for Christ? How can I now glorify the Master I love? The nearer we live to Him, and the closer our union with Him, the more fruit we bear, the more happiness we enjoy: for out of Christ, however favourable all outward circumstances may be, all is darkness, discontent, dissatisfaction."

Mr. Bickersteth's enjoyment at Kirkby was increased by the society of his brother John, who was about the same time married to Miss Lang. A tour among the lakes was undertaken, and after a few weeks of pleasant family intercourse, he returned to Norwich, to enjoy the domestic pleasures he had anticipated. Perfect happiness on earth, he knew his own heart too well to expect. "As sinful creatures," he wrote, "we shall need the spirit of conciliation and concession; but, as redeemed creatures, I trust we shall have some of the purest pleasures in each other that fallen man is capable of enjoying. Here are my highest and best hopes."

These hopes were not disappointed, a union, based so completely on Christian principle, proved a source of continual happiness. For thirty-eight years the great object in life of his beloved partner was to assist him in carrying on the great work, which the Lord afterwards laid upon him; and he often gratefully acknowledged that he could not have gone through it, without her help, in removing every needless source of care from his mind. His home was ever to him the most delightful place on earth. The love and esteem, expressed in these letters, proved indeed perpetual friendship, and never shone

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brighter than when, on his dying bed, amidst the decay of both mental and bodily powers, he called his daughter to his side, to bear one more testimony to her mother's worth, and to remind her how deeply his children were indebted, in almost every thing, to her judicious care.

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CHAPTER IX.

LABOURS AT NORWICH.

A. D. 1812—1814.

Mr. Bickersteth had expected to be called to the work of the Lord in some sphere of ministerial or missionary labour, with a sacrifice of worldly advantages; but now, while earthly blessings were more and more showered upon him, the links which bound him to his profession were strengthened, and the door of entrance to the ministry seemed to be entirely closed. It was the will of God yet further to try the faithfulness of His servant, and to allow him to prove the strength of his principles in entirely new circumstances, before He commissioned Him, as His minister, to enforce those principles on others. Hitherto his time had been at the disposal of another, and it was chiefly by diligently serving an earthly master, that he had been able to show his faithfulness to a Master in heaven. Hitherto few worldly enjoyments had drawn his affections from things above; the hours given to business were fatiguing, and often harassing; his room in Hatton Court was solitary, and communion with his God, or the quiet study of religious books, had been his chief recreation. Now all the pleasures of domestic life were given him, and time for retirement implied the

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sacrifice of social converse. Fresh temptations to worldliness, over-anxiety, and covetousness, also beset him, now that the interests of so many who were dear to him, were dependent on his industry, and bound up in his success. He had enjoyed the choicest religious advantages, under the eminent men who ministered in the Churches in London; now he was often to feel the want of a Gospel ministry. In London he had been one of a little band of Christians, united by close ties of mutual affection, and labouring together in many benevolent and religious societies. He was now to stand comparatively alone, in the midst of a very dead and cold city, and to originate and carry forward works of love, amidst difficulties and opposition.

The journal at this period is much shorter, and bears evident traces how painfully he felt the temptations and difficulties of his situation. In its transparent simplicity, each changing phase of his religious experience is seen; and while it tells of seasons of revival, of blessing on the Sacrament, of holy resolutions, of continual watchfulness and conflict, it is full of self-reproach for increasing worldliness, for diminished time given to sacred duties, for the dangerous consequences of worldly prosperity, for the decay of first love. While, however, he thus accused himself before God, before men he was enabled to take up a decidedly Christian position, and not only to oppose evil, but to bestir himself diligently in works of love. Almost immediately on their return to Norwich, he and Mrs. Bickersteth, who was no stranger among the poor in that city, gathered a few children together for instruction on the Sabbath evening. This small beginning soon increased, and a large Sunday school was assembled,

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which was one of his greatest objects of interest during his residence in Norwich. He attached himself strongly to the children, his "very dear school-children," as he called them; and when he left Norwich, one of his chief anxieties was, how they should be provided for. Not long after, a Benevolent Society was formed, as far as possible on the model of that in Spitalfields, and he continued personally to visit those in affliction and distress. This Society was afterwards enlarged, and embraced all the thirty-six parishes of the city. Circumstances in Norwich compelled him to submit to a change in its constitution, which he much regretted, "I feel," he wrote, "the present situation of our Benevolent Society quite a burden upon my mind. We gave up the profession of giving religious instruction, and though our relief to the temporal wants of the poor has been greatly extended, our meetings have been dry and barren, and I have many fears as to the ultimate result. My conscience, however, does not accuse me, as I trust we acted from principle in the whole of our conduct." It had been a question, with him, whether to continue in the Society after this change: but, considering that religious instruction was not prohibited, and that the relief of distress, a plain Christian duty, was the object still avowed, he did not feel justified in leaving it. The same principles which guided him here, led him through life to subscribe to many institutions, which he believed were carrying on a great work, though he might not approve all their regulations. Wherever the blessing of God rested on efforts for the good of men, he was ready with a helping hand; and by this catholic spirit he was linked in bonds of holy fellow-

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ship with many, from whom he would otherwise have been wholly separated.

The most important public work he undertook in Norwich was the founding of a Church Missionary Association. A flourishing Bible Society had been established some time before, chiefly by the influence of Mr. Gurney's family, and his partner, Mr. Bignold, had been very active in promoting it. Mr. Bickersteth, on his arrival, entered with deep interest into this association, which was so much blessed, that Bibles could scarcely be procured fast enough to meet the wants of the poor. "But why," he asked, "should we not also have a Church Missionary Society?" The question thus raised was not likely to remain unanswered in a mind like his. He wrote to Mr. Pratt, and to Mr. Wilson, the present Bishop of Calcutta, to ask if they would come down and advocate the cause in Norwich, provided he could secure pulpits. They consented, and he went round among the clergy, endeavouring to induce them to admit the claims of the Society. At first he met with nothing but discouragement. "What we shall do for the Church Missionary Society, I know not," he wrote to a friend, "only this I know, the cause is Christ's, and He will take care of it, and none can oppose His cause with any ultimate success; but the great men in the Church are mostly averse to it, and the Dissenters cannot, with any propriety, take an active part in helping us. One would hardly believe it possible that Christian ministers could make excuses, when asked to favour the spread of the Gospel among the heathen; but so it is, they wait to see what others will do—this, they say, is not the right time, the right people have not taken it up. All these, if I durst tell them so, are the excuses of the

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Devil, and not of the Spirit of God. Yet I cannot but hope we shall have a Society that will do something, next month; at least I mean to try."

He did try, for opposition ever made him more resolute in a good work. The obstinacy which marked his temper as a child, had been moulded into a holy determination of spirit, which nothing could shake, and which often carried him through difficulties from which more pliable minds would have shrunk. "Well," he exclaimed in a party of friends where one and another were vacillating, "a Church Missionary Association there shall be in Norwich, if I stand alone on the Castle Hill to proclaim it, and my wife be secretary." "You shall not be alone, I will stand by you," replied his friend Mr. Tacey; and then others came forward with offers of help. At length four pulpits were obtained. He now spared no efforts to spread information, and excite interest: circulars were printed and scattered so widely, that the curiosity of the county was awakened. A noble meeting was assembled in St. Andrew's Hall, and £700 were raised in one day for the Society, which soon swelled to £1000. Since then, meetings have been held annually in Norwich.

A letter to his friend, Mr. Cooper, describes his feelings at this unhoped-for success. "You, as a member of the Church Missionary Committee, will, I doubt not, have heard before this what great things God has done for us at Norwich, much beyond our ideas. We have raised between eight or nine hundred pounds; and I trust those blessed men who came to help us have excited a missionary spirit which will still do much more. What abundant cause we have for continual thanksgiving for all these mercies! Before our London friends came down,

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we were all anxiety and trepidation, doubtful even whether we should get three hundred pounds; but that heavenly Father, to whom we committed all our fears, mercifully heard our prayers, and gave us a success beyond our hopes. This mercy was so undeserved, that I am compelled to glory in His grace alone.

"I quite enter into your feelings, of never seeing myself such a poor, sinful, helpless worm as now, nor ever seeing more the necessity and value of our precious Redeemer. Christ is indeed all to me, as well as to you, and to advance His glory, promote His cause, live and die in His service, is our highest interest and happiness. O that I may have grace given me at length to begin to do these things in good earnest!"

During the whole time he remained in Norwich, he delighted in labours for the cause of this Society, and rejoiced to have his house filled, even to overflowing, with the deputation who attended the annual meeting. His father feared he was undertaking too much, and suggested that there were independent gentlemen in Norfolk, less occupied than he was, who should take up works like these. "My dear father," he wrote in answer, "does not recollect, that in Norwich we cannot find independent gentlemen who are willing to exert themselves in promoting the spread of religion. Indeed, what did I come to Norwich for, or what is the best and greatest end of my existence but this? Ah! I feel I am sadly too cold and indifferent about it,—so cold that I need all your prayers, that I may not become quite heartless and dead in my Master's service."

In another letter he wrote: "Your unworthy son ventured to speak again at the meeting. You will probably

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see what he said in a Norwich paper of next week. The fact is, while none else will come forward, I feel it to be my duty to do so, and to use the talent God has entrusted me with to His glory. How pleasant, how delightful is the lowest service for God, when He smiles upon it! The work is wages, the labour itself the highest pleasure."

The Jews' Society also engaged his attention. "We are at present," he wrote to his sister in May 1814, "busy for the Jews. There are to be three sermons preached here on Sunday next, and though we do not think it expedient to establish at present a Branch Association, we hope to excite a considerable interest for the Society."

In the midst of these labours he was not unconscious of the spiritual dangers, to which external activity exposes the soul. In one of the letters, in 1814, giving an account of his missionary work, he writes: "We go on much in the same way as usual, fully engaged from morning till night with work of one kind or other: I sometimes fancy, few can have busier lives than we. I am sure, however, such a state of constant occupation requires watchfulness and much prayer; lest the main thing—the life of faith, and the constant preparation for another state—should be lost sight of. It is so easy to imagine that being busy in good works (either business, or societies, or schools) is religion, that there is great danger lest we deceive ourselves, and forget that religion consists chiefly in the state of the soul before God, in the fixed bent of the will to serve Him alone, in the surrender of the heart and affections in His cause and service, in meekness, piety, humility, love, and deadness to the world. And when we forget this, we no longer feel our

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need of the Saviour's grace to strengthen and assist us; we cease to apply to Him with that earnestness we once did, and all becomes cold, formal and lifeless."

In these works of love Mr. Bickersteth was fully seconded by his partner, Mr. Bignold, who was ever ready to encourage him, and stir him up to fresh liberality. They had determined to carry on their business on strictly religious principles. "I would endeavour," he wrote, "without anxiety, to commit every temporal as well as spiritual concern to God, and to conduct my business as accountable to Him, now my only and my best Master, and as dependent on Him for wisdom, industry, ability, faith, and every other grace." His journal (which at this time is written in short-hand) shows how closely he questioned himself as to the strict integrity of all his proceedings.

Business, carried on in this spirit, was blessed of God. He wrote to his parents, who had paid him a visit in the summer of 1813:—"Every thing is going on here very comfortably since you left us. When I look back, I am astonished at the mercies of that God who is continually blessing me. Two years back, I was a poor clerk, not knowing what would become of me, or how I should gain a maintenance; but I was enabled to rest every care upon God, so that it never gave me an anxious thought, and now what a change has taken place. I have a dear wife, a comfortable home, an ample income; am settled in the midst of the kindest friends, and in a place of great usefulness, if I will but use the opportunities God affords me. What great cause then have I for continual praise, and for prayer also, that I may use the world without abusing it! but I have still greater cause

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for humility, when I remember how little I have improved those privileges, so that, instead of leading me to God, they have often led me from Him. Ah! of how little value is every mercy and blessing, if we do not enjoy God in them, as the Source of all, and the best mercy of all."

These mercies were not, however, unmixed with troubles. "I think I can hardly remember," he wrote to his sister Mary, "a day without some trial,—something to cross our inclination, and tell us this is not our rest. They are indeed, as one calls them, blessings in disguise, working good for the soul. I should be sorry to take events out of a Father's hand: it is best, it is wisest, to leave all our concerns with Him, to obtain a will entirely conformed to His; but nothing is more difficult than, in the hour of trial, to bring our spirits into subjection to the Father of Spirits."

Mr. Bickersteth desired by social intercourse to commend religion, and did not therefore withdraw from the usual courtesies of life; but visiting was very irksome to him. His account of his first dinner-party is characteristic. "We had this day, for the first time, some friends to dine with us. All seemed to pass off very smoothly. We shall dine with them on Thursday. I shall be very glad when these visitings are over, for I find myself so little able to do good on such occasions, that the time seems almost wholly lost. I know indeed it is not lost; if I can in any measure please my company, and thus make them have a more favourable view of religious characters; but it is some little self-denial, when you know you have important duties to attend to, and when your time could be so valuably employed elsewhere, to have it

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lost in trifling conversation." This dislike of visiting arose from no unsocial habit of mind. Few enjoyed more keenly the pleasures of Christian intercourse. Two or three extracts from his letters to Mr. Cooper, one of his most attached London companions, will show how he valued the society of kindred friends. "You are very often in my thoughts. I think of our mutual prayers, of our delightful conversations, and of our visits to the poor, with a grateful recollection of a Father's goodness, in giving me such a companion and friend, and with an earnest desire that, now I have lost the benefit of your company, I may not become lukewarm and cold in my Redeemer's service. There is a feeling among Christians, which makes them intimate friends in a very little time. I quite felt this with Miss W.; it is the communion of saints, the feeling one member of the body has for another,—having the same hope, the same Lord, the same Spirit. Yes, my friend, I trust that God, in fellowship with whom is all your strength, support, and joy, is also all my strength, support, and joy. We are daily drinking, I trust, at the same fountain of life. I think that God is leading me here from all dependence on the creature; He has separated me from my beloved ministers and Christian friends, that I may lean on His arm alone. Yet, my dearest Cooper, my wife and myself found great refreshment, quite a revival of heart, from your kind, very kind visit. You have, I trust, been instrumental in awakening and reviving in us a new spirit of devotion and love. Indeed if the smallest increase of grace be infinitely more valuable than the largest and greatest earthly good—as it certainly is—we can never be too grateful for your kindness. May God help us, weak and worthless as we are in ourselves, thus to edify each other in love."

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In his own family, Mr. Bickersteth strove to make religion the governing principle. He was in the habit of praying three times a day with his wife; family prayer was also his delight. "I find," he wrote to his sister, "more of the presence of God, and seem to obtain more grace and strength in family prayer, than in all other means besides; so that I would not be without it for all the world could give." He never failed to gain the affection of his servants by his kindness, consideration for their feelings, and willingness to overlook small neglects, where no great moral principle was concerned. Many owed their first religious impressions to instructions received under his roof.

The following letter, written when his wife was called to spend a month with her sister in London, will show how tenderly he watched over her spiritual interests.

MY DEAREST LOVE,

I have been counting on the pleasure of writing to my dearest wife, and have got up an hour earlier, and begun a long sheet for that purpose. I seem to miss you more and more, and begin to think this month will be a very long affair. Ah, no! when eternity opens upon us, our whole life itself will be a dream, a vapour, a shadow, a moment. I trust I have already found some advantage in the separation. I begin to seek my happiness more simply in God. We were so happy in each other, and enjoyed so much comfort together, that we did not go to our God with that thirsting, longing spirit, which He alone can satisfy. This God is our God in Christ, and our portion for ever and ever; and it was my prayer for you this morning, that you might find Him far better to you than your husband; that you might make Him your bosom friend, and rejoice in His care and love, now your husband cannot watch over you. . . . I did not go to Church in the evening, and was

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left alone. You know how much I enjoy such retired moments. I sought our God, and I found His presence, and enjoyed sweet communion with Him. I pleaded earnestly with Him for my own soul, and then for yours; earnestly praying that God would deliver you from every evil, and would grant that your soul might receive great benefit from hearing Gospel ministers in London, and praying also that you might be made useful.

Thus my dearest will see that, though absent in body, she is continually in my mind. . . . . How much I think of you when reading the chapter in Luke. I hope you keep pace with me; I read the latter part of the 7th chapter this morning. What delightful views this chapter gives us of our best Friend, of our beloved Saviour! How kindly He listens to the elders of the Jews, verses 3—6, and readily goes with them; how He delights to declare the faith of the centurion, and how instantly He heals his servant! In the next relation, we find He does not wait to be solicited; the sight of the misery at once moves Him with compassion, and He restores the dead son. O may He heal our backslidings; may He revive our dead souls! What an interesting view we have also of His character at the Pharisee's house! With what condescension He admits the penitent feelings of the poor woman! how gently, and how forcibly, He reproves Simon! What an encouragement He affords us to come unto Him, that our sins may be forgiven! . . .

I have done nothing more about the piece of land: it appears to offer many advantages; but in so important a step as might lead to a removal of residence, I would not stir, till I saw the leadings of Providence clear. We are apt to think too much of houses, and goods, and land; forgetting that all is vanity that falls short of an enduring, eternal good; and what will it profit to gain all, and lose our soul? We think, when we get a little property, we get something good, we get something like independence; but what vanity is this, compared with escaping one sin, or doing the smallest thing that will please the Lord of all, and obtain His favour, who "will never leave us, nor forsake us!"

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In the year 1813, his sister Mary left home to keep her brother's house in Liverpool. Mr. Bickersteth, who had so lately himself experienced the spiritual dangers connected with a complete change of scene and circumstances, wrote the following letter to warn her against them.

Norwich, Aug. 1813.

MY BELOVED SISTER,

. . . . Now you are about to enter the more busy scenes of life, in the gay and dissipated town of Liverpool, I feel that fear which I know you have felt yourself, perhaps still more strongly. This fear is a very useful feeling, but it will of itself necessarily soon wear away.

When we begin the day with fervent prayer, in which we have been enabled to persevere with strong cries and entreatics for God's help and grace, that day is sure to go on well and comfortably. There is a holy feeling spread over it. When we go into the world, we see it is another society. We feel we are strangers and pilgrims, and are not at home. It is therefore worth much care to obtain these views; and I believe, however cold and dead we may be at the beginning of our devotions, if we will but keep waiting upon God, and laying our sins and our wants before Him, we shall at length obtain the light of His countenance, and the comfort and presence of His help. O how richly does this repay every endeavour to obtain it, and what a preservative does it form against the vapid pleasures of a vain world!

Again, you have felt, I know, the advantage of a slow and deliberate reading your Bible, with much prayer and patience, morning after morning, and night after night. You have found in this way how you have obtained fresh views of the infinite love of God, and grace of the Saviour, and how calculated the word of God is to promote the spiritual mind, and growth in grace. But you have also found what self-denial it requires to continue this practice, and

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how often you are tempted to omit it, though you know how important it is to your soul's good.

How needful too, is self-examination! We are quite ignorant of our state before God without it; and if we entirely neglect it, I fear it must be considered a strong mark of our having turned back from God; and yet how difficult it is to keep up this duty with any tolerable degree of regularity, and how cursorily we are apt to go through it. I believe it a useful rule, to make the portion of Scripture we read the rule of self-examination, and to try ourselves by it; but provided we really perform the duty, we can take whatever rule we find most useful.

As to retirement on the Sabbath, I have long found it a most important and beneficial rule, to give that day to God as entirely as possible, and especially to spend at least an hour or two alone. I am sure, humanly speaking, all religion would soon be gone from me, if I did not adopt this plan. Every Sunday, spent in this way, gives us new strength in our spiritual warfare. I therefore see no friends on the Sunday, go out no where, and never allow the servants to do so. And thus I have the comfort of having a quiet, happy Sunday at home.

You are happy, my dear sister, in having our dear Robert glad to concur in your plans of family devotion; and I have no doubt he will find a great comfort in them, and see it a duty, on no pretext of company whatever, to omit them. My dear sister will also see the importance of forming no intimate acquaintance but with real Christians. Such an acquaintance with any other, would be the most effectual hindrance and bar to real religion in the heart.

Much as you probably abhor the thought of falling backward, you will be happy in no common degree, if you have not your seasons of coldness and backsliding; but I can hardly sufficiently urge upon you and upon myself, the importance of not making undue compliances, even in the smallest matters, and of being quite resolute at the first temptation.

Your sincerely affectionate brother,

E. BICKERSTETH.

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It pleased God to visit his beloved mother with an alarming paralytic stroke. For some time she was in danger, and though she rallied, and lived twenty years afterwards, her fine mind never fully recovered its energy, and for a long period she was subject to many infirmities. In a letter written to his father in this time of sorrow, he thus expresses the feelings of his heart.

Your letter has indeed deeply affected us. This is a most unexpected stroke from a Father's hand; yet it is given in perfect wisdom and love, and for ever adored be His name. Little indeed did I think, when I parted with my dearest mother so lately, she would soon be so great a sufferer. It is hard to make the heart bow in unfeigned submission to God's will; and while we would comfort and help you, we feel we want comfort and help ourselves; never was a mother more justly, more ardently loved by her children. . .

Your affectionate children,

E. AND S. BICKERSTETH.

This year his father removed to Liverpool, so that Mr. Bickersteth's last visit to Kirkby, as his home, was in the summer of 1814. He wrote to his sister Charlotte on the spiritual dangers connected with the hurry of a removal, describing at the same time the pressure of business which rested on himself.

. . . . I myself, my love, am particularly engaged in the world at this time. Our bills are all greatly in arrear, and our general business takes up the day; I have to attend the office from nine in the morning till nine at night; in addition to this, the Church Missionary Society calls for much attention, the anniversary being in three weeks. Some might say, what have you to do with the Missionary Society, when you have so much business? but I could tell them, they know nothing about it. Attention to the cause of

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Christ, and our religious duties, does not distract, but it bears up and strengthens the mind, to go with zeal and patience through all the duties of life. Ah! miserable would it be for me, were my heart engrossed by worldly concerns; and in this view, business itself becomes a vanity and a snare. We may be so troubled about many things, as to forget the one thing needful. I am sure, in a season of great worldly business or changes, we have more than ever especial need of divine grace, that we may not give too much attention to worldly things, and forget far more important ones; and therefore, my love, whilst I ask your prayers for myself, I assure you, you have our continual prayers for you.

In the spring he spent some time in London, but did not remain long enough to witness the festivities which attended the royal visits of that eventful year. "I was not sorry," he wrote to his father, "to get out of the great bustle of London, before the Emperor and King came. For my own part, I prefer quiet and retirement to all the fine sights in the world. Yet I did greatly enjoy the privilege of hearing the gospel fully and effectually preached in London. O what a mercy it will be if you have this privilege at Liverpool."

He was rejoiced with accounts of his beloved sister's consistent conduct and labours among the poor, and wrote thus in November to cheer and strengthen her.

Norwich, November 1814.

MY DEAREST MARY,

I am at present endeavouring to write a short tract on reading the Scriptures, for the use of the subscribers to the Bible Association. It occurs to me, that I once wrote you a letter on the subject. Perhaps there may be something in that, which may be useful to me; and I should be obliged, if you have not lost the letter, if you could give me the leading ideas in it. I should be still more

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thankful, if you and those about you would earnestly pray, that in this, and every similar attempt, I may have God's help and blessing. There is a great and wide field here, the ministers in the Establishment do little—very little ; and the enemy of souls is ruining thousands—they are destroyed for lack of knowledge. I suppose it is much the same with you at Liverpool, but we need not despair. We can pray, we can believe, we can work ; and the mighty arm, under which we serve, can soon accomplish far more than our most ardent hopes have dared to expect ; can send labourers into His vineyard, and raise up instruments exactly qualified for accomplishing all we long to see done. I long to see this in Norwich ; you long to see it in Liverpool. Let us tarry the Lord's leisure, wait, pray, believe, and I am persuaded it will be done.

Depend upon it, God has sent you and our other dear friends to Liverpool, because He had work for you to do there. Endeavour to discover what that is, and say with St. Paul, "Lord, what wouldest Thou have me to do?" If a servant girl could lead Naaman to the true God, depend upon it you will have many opportunities of great usefulness in such a place as Liverpool ; may you be enabled to be faithful in the use of the talents given you! You know not what a blessing even the example of patient suffering may prove to those around you. I am persuaded it has already been blessed ; go on, my beloved sister ; as you water others, your own soul shall be watered. I think your station of usefulness is in the Church, and though you may find it needful, till faithful ministers are sent, to go to the Dissenters for your soul's good, yet I trust, such ministers will in time be given to your prayers, and then you will find in the Establishment all you need.

I rejoice in what you told me of dear ——. May he be kept prayerful and watchful! There are peculiar dangers to young beginners in religion, but their Saviour is mighty, if they can but leave all with Him. Remember to apply to Him.

Ever affectionately yours,

E. BICKERSTETH.

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Allusion is made in this letter to his sister's practice of attending Mr. Raffles' chapel, the churches in Liverpool being at that time very ill supplied. He had been anxious to induce others to leave her free to follow the dictates of her own conscience, and when she wrote expressly to ask his counsel, his answer was as follows. "I trust you do right, my dear sister, in attending Mr. Raffles, though he be a Dissenter: it is, however, a question of some difficulty, where you cannot hear the gospel preached in the Church, whether you ought to go to Dissenters for it. The difficulty arises chiefly from two considerations. 1st. Whether you are not encouraging separatists. 2nd. Whether you are not rendering evangelical religion suspicious, as if it were impossible to be evangelical, and yet a church-goer; but I confess the importance of obtaining the bread of life, and the water of life, appears to me to outweigh every other consideration; and if the Church here were quite without the gospel, I should feel little scruple in going once a day to chapel. The great thing is, how can our souls be best quickened, warned, strengthened, directed, and assisted in their pilgrimage; and I think it is very clear we require continually to be roused and stirred up, by hearing the gospel freely and fully proclaimed from the pulpit, as well as all other means of grace."

His own trials at Norwich, and the state of the Church in Liverpool, led him to dwell much at this time on the importance of faithful preaching. "I want," he wrote, "when I go to the house of God, to be warned, excited, exhorted, reproved, instructed, and directed. I want to have the kernel of religion, and not the mere outside shell. I can live upon the one, but not upon the other. Yet, after all, much depends on previous preparation,

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and the state of mind in which we go. If we have been half-an-hour in private before church-time, we shall not go in vain, we shall find God in the midst of His holy temple, and we shall return, saying, 'It was good for us to have been there.' My judgment is decidedly in favour of the Establishment in all the main points, especially in its Liturgy, which is invaluable; yet I dare not condemn the Dissenters. Sorry indeed should I be to think worse of another man's religious state, because he was a Dissenter—(I do not speak of Socinians and Papists.) The Bible Society has been an invaluable instrument, if it had only removed the prejudices which subsist between good men of various denominations."

When he heard that his family were likely to enjoy a faithful ministry at Liverpool, he wrote: "We have just received dear Charlotte's letter; I had heard of your bright prospects before. A faithful ministry is an immense help in keeping alive that flame of devotion, which the Holy Spirit has kindled in the heart of the believer; it is not the oil, but it is the continual trimming, without which the lamp burns dim, and the light hardly shines before others. Yet the great thing is fervent private prayer;—thence we draw fresh supplies of that blessed Spirit which keeps all alive; and, however we may feel, and mourn for, a wandering and cold heart in our devotions, distracted and feeble as our prayers may be, they reach the ear of our heavenly Father, through an all-prevailing Mediator, and obtain for us all we need: we should soon find the difference, if our great enemy could prevail on us to leave them off."

The questions, discussed in these letters, were at all times felt by Mr. Bickersteth to be very difficult. His

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mature views on the subject are given in the "Christian Hearer."

"'It is not a matter of indifference what we hear. Truth is the proper nourishment of the soul. If it be mere moral precepts on the one hand, or theoretical notions on the other, it is not Christianity. The native appetite of the new-born soul is for Christian truth, pure scriptural truth in all its parts, both doctrine and precept, and this it must have. As David, when hungry, ate the shew-bread, so the hungry soul must have truth. Preaching the word is God's ordinance; but if it be not His word, but human notions and inventions that are preached, it ceases to be an ordinance of God. If there be a well of brackish and bad water in my own yard, and a good well in a neighbour's, I am glad to get water at his well. Yet, on the other hand, there must be a limitation, a wise limitation, to the right of private judgment, and we should ask ourselves, How much judgment have I to use? We come to hear as learners, and not as judges.

"Taking these things into consideration, let us endeavour to illustrate the subject by various practical cases that occur.

"Suppose the worst case. The minister is unfaithful in his sermons, and immoral in his conduct. He preaches not Christ, and yet is full of envy and strife. (Phil. i. 15.) Here even, enquire first how far you are a partaker of his sins. Have you attended to the direction—"First cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye?" (Matt. vii. 5.) If immoral, have you warned him? have you reported him to the Ordinary? have you taken any steps towards the removal of such a man? have you even prayed perseveringly any length of time for him? Supposing that you have done your part to rectify so serious an evil, I dare not say that you should attend such an appointed teacher; I dare not forbid your attendance on a neighbouring pious clergyman.

"Suppose another case. A minister, moral in his outward conduct, and you think him legal or antinomian, ignorant or unsound;

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uncharitable or controversial, in the general course of his ministry, and perhaps worldly in his spirit. It may be well again, first, to enquire within, and see whether you have good ground for such a judgment, or whether the fault be not in yourself. Other circumstances are also to be taken into consideration. In the Established Church we have this immense advantage, that the prayers are always evangelical and spiritual, and a very large proportion of the Holy Scriptures is always read in the public congregation, so that you can never be entirely destitute of the truth. A man's situation may be so leading and prominent, that his defection from the parish Church, and going to another Church, may materially injure his general usefulness, and cause greater evils than any supposed personal loss. Or a person may be connected with the minister, as part of his family, or related to him, or dependent on him. Experience has shewn, that the souls of Christians have eminently flourished, where they have given up personal advantage and comfort, out of regard to the spirit of unity, and from tender consideration for the feelings of others, and earnest endeavours to do the most good on the whole. Again, there may be no neighbouring Church, where you can have the advantage of hearing the truth: now, with regard to attending worship among other bodies of Christians, the late Mr. Hey justly remarked, 'The hearing of a good minister, is not the whole of religious duty. To hear regularly, I must become a member of some particular community, that may require of me things with which I cannot conscientiously comply: or I may have a large family to educate in some religious persuasion, which may have great weight in the choice of my communion.' Let these things at least have their full weight on your mind; consider them in prayer before God, consult experienced Christian friends, and then decide, as conscience shall direct.

"We would not recommend continuance with an erroneous and wicked teacher. The primitive Church clearly held that Christians ought to leave an irregular and profane pastor. Cyprian and the African bishops lay it down as a rule, that the people who are

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obedient to the Lord's commandments, and fear God, ought to separate from a sinful bishop; and so Irenæus shews, that we ought to separate from heretical bishops, and adhere to those who faithfully keep the Apostles' doctrine. The general council of Constantinople lays down this rule. 'That, whoever separate from such as publicly teach heresy in the Church, even before they are synodically condemned, are not guilty of schism, but maintain the unity of the Church from schisms, by condemning, not a bishop, but a false bishop, and a false teacher."

In the year 1814, Mr. Bickersteth began his labours as an author, by publishing a little pamphlet, entitled, "A Help to the Study of the Scriptures, by a Churchman."* It was afterwards much enlarged, and has been one of the most widely circulated of his works, having been translated into modern Greek, as well as into many of the languages of Europe. The first occasion of its being written was a Bible meeting held at Norwich. "Now, friend Bickersteth," said J. J. Gurney, "they have got new Bibles, thee must tell them how to read them:" A simple, practical exhortation was accordingly given. "Now, friend," added Mr. Gurney, "thee must put that into a little book, that they may have it to read again." The hint was considered, and acted upon; his zeal was stirred by the sight of several new Bibles in the cottages of the poor, which they did not appear to have any wish or intention to read; and he gave his leisure hours eagerly to the work, bestowing much careful study upon it, and seeking the aid of some

* In the year 1810, when his friend Mr. W. C. Wilson wished a letter he had written to appear in the Christian Guardian, he consented to its being offered to the Editors; but added, "I have particular reasons, that is, reasons which influence me individually, for not wishing to send things for the Magazines. I certainly have found pride to be one of the worst enemies I have had to contend with; and I have been astonished how the smallest things have increased it."

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of his most valued friends in revising and correcting it. "It will be a rich reward," he wrote to his sister, "if it please God to make it useful to any one, and I cannot but hope, from what I hear, it may be so. I learn that some approved it highly, before they knew that the author was what they please to call a Calvinist, who most probably would never have read it, had my name been prefixed."

The following letter was written to his friend, Mr. W. C. Wilson, Junr., on his ordination.

Norwich, Nov. 7, 1814.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I owe you many thanks for your kind and particularly welcome letter, which interested us exceedingly. God be greatly thanked for the favourable disposition, both of the bishop and clergy. I rejoice that my valued friend is now a labourer in the Lord's vineyard, and thus gives another answer to the prayers of those, who are continually asking the great Lord of the harvest to send forth labourers. How momentous the high charge entrusted to you! It is pleasing to see you have such deep views of it. How glorious the office, and yet how immense the responsibility, and yet again how all-sufficient the offered grace and strength! It is my heart's desire you may be found faithful. Will you allow an elder in years, though younger in grace, to attempt giving you such hints as have struck me as being important? not because I do not think you are fully aware of them, or would neglect them, but as a token of Christian love, and out of a desire to fulfil that precept: "Exhort one another daily;" and as using the liberty of an old friend.

How justly you insist upon the grand secret of religion, the living upon the Saviour, the continual looking to Him. All that is desirable in ourselves, all that is useful to others, must, I am persuaded, be drawn simply from this source; and whatever else I would mention must be in entire subserviency to this.

Humanly speaking, how much of the religion of your family,

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your friends, and your people, depends upon the state of religion in your own heart! If the unction of the Holy One abides abundantly upon you, the fragrance, if I may so speak, will refresh and revive all about you. If there be a holy atmosphere, as it were, surrounding you, it will either win the sinner over to you, or he will not dare to sin in your presence. But if, on the other hand, the minister is lukewarm, it paralyzes all. In this view what a responsibility rests upon you! I have felt something of this, even in my situation; you will be much more prominent, and will feel it more. Can you have, my dear friend, the value of immortal souls too deeply impressed on your mind? Surely those who see it in the liveliest colours have but a faint idea of the reality. To live and to preach, with eternity full before you, is indeed a main point; and therefore I would venture to recommend frequent and deep meditation on this head. You will, I know, attempt great things, and may God give you wisdom in every attempt, leaving the result and the burden of all with the Saviour. Indeed without this, the weight of the care of immortal souls would be intolerable. We cannot expect too much from Him; but is it not a needful caution to prepare for disappointments from others, to arm ourselves with much patience and long-suffering? How long have many of the servants of God waited, some for years, some all their lives long, without seeing any fruit of their labour! They sowed the seed, and others reaped the harvest. Here, then, faith and patience may be greatly tried. Again, those of whom you entertain the best hopes may fall away,—professed friends become bitter enemies,—and your soul (deeply anxious for their spiritual welfare) may be ready to faint within you. Another thing to guard against is, lest the warmth, fervour and zeal you now feel for perishing sinners, should abate and fail. I know you will pray mightily against this, and Jesus will hear your prayers, so that you will never greatly fall away. Yet still, with a corrupt heart, and a chilling, distracting world, we need much watchfulness. I am sure I have often had occasion to regret my backslidings. As to your sermons, may I suggest hints also? You are

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determined, I know, in the full sense of the word, to preach Christ, "made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." Every sermon you preach will be with the view of proclaiming this salvation, exalting this Saviour. The idea gladdens my heart, that the great Friend of sinners has got another servant determined to make his name known. I have found those sermons come most home to my heart, which have convinced my conscience of my great sinfulness, and brought me, as a perishing sinner, to the Saviour. Those sermons have been sweetest, which have contained an invitation to the worst, the vilest of all, even to the hypocrite and the nominal Christian, to come and receive a free salvation, to accept the gift of eternal life. There is something reviving in the idea of having received a fresh invitation from the ambassador of Christ: the heart closes with it, and says, "This suits me." May I say also, 'If practicable, go from your closet to the house of God.' In going to the poor, and instructing my family, I have found so much difference when I have been in private prayer first, that I am persuaded this is of vast importance. It makes the soul burn with love to poor sinners; it fills it with ardent zeal for the glory of God and the increase of his kingdom. Your visits to the poor, and much reading your Bible, will furnish you with abundant matter for your discourses, so as to enable you to bring things new and old before your hearers, exactly suited to their wants. What abundant encouragements you have to animate your labours! I know the love of Christ would be enough to constrain you, yet the present happiness and the eternal salvation of immortal souls, which, under God, depend so much on your ministry, will greatly encourage you to be instant in season and out of season. You are also entering into the path of a glorious band of confessors for Christ, and you will share their reward. You fight under the banner of the great Lord of all; He must be victorious, and you will partake of His triumph. We are all in good health here. I thank God, the Missionary Society continues to prosper. We have good hopes of faithful ministers coming among us. We expect —— at Christ-

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mas. These things will be an answer to many prayers. You will remember I can hear nothing from Kirkby but through you, and that letters are a stimulus to prayer, and I am persuaded I need not say more to induce you to write as you have opportunity.

Affectionately yours,

E. BICKERSTETH.

P. S. On reading over my letter, I cannot but fear lest I should appear as having assumed a superiority, or as dictatorial, though nothing was further from my intention. Forgive me, if there be such an appearance, and excuse a letter written in all the hurry of business. How it would delight me, if I could sit at your feet, and hear from you, Sunday after Sunday, the sweet sound of gospel truth.

To the same friend, who had written to him in a time of some religious depression, he replied :

Norwich, June 22nd, 1815.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Your letter ought to have had an earlier answer; indeed I have been longing to answer it, but I will not take up our time in excuses. You can hardly conceive what a comfort it was to me and my wife. We said, has our highly-valued friend these feelings which have so often perplexed our minds? then our case is not singular;—we have no doubt of his acceptance with God, and therefore may be encouraged as it respects our own. May not the solution of the case you put respecting desire for, and enjoyment in prayer and the word, be this? The Holy Spirit is free in all His operations; we should not see this, or feel the need of His influence, if we always enjoyed comfort in the means of grace. It pleases Him at times to make us, as it were, manifestly sensible of His presence, by peculiar and uncommon assistance;—our souls are greatly enlarged in praying for ourselves and others, the Scriptures come home with peculiar force to our consciences, and our hearts are much animated and

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encouraged. In these blessed seasons, we are called upon to work with that God, who thus powerfully worketh in us. At other times His influence seems less powerful upon our souls, prayer and reading the word *appear* (for they are not really so) barren and unprofitable. What lessons are we then taught at this season! How we see our own emptiness, how we are humbled under the sense of our own unprofitableness, how tender we are made towards others! The sun is withdrawn, and all seems dark and gloomy; but the dew of divine grace is secretly, silently, and richly fertilizing the soil. Amidst all my own wretched backslidings, and miserable attainments, I feel a sure persuasion that God is, amidst all, carrying on His great work in my soul; and that whilst every day I am deserving eternal ruin, the mercy which spares me is causing all to work together for my good; truly marvellous is the grace of God. No miracle in the Bible seems so great as the miracle of God's love to a redeemed sinner; it passeth all knowledge.

You ask me, What is the secret of abiding in Christ? It is a compound grace, if I may so say, of humility, faith, and love: humility, by which the soul feels its own nothingness and emptiness; faith, by which it embraces the Saviour, as all-sufficient for every want; and love, by which it continually dwells with Him. . . May you be "strong in the Lord, and the power of His might," faithfully declaring "the whole counsel of God;" and as you grow in grace, and in usefulness, may you daily become more humbled in the views of yourself and your labours, is the earnest prayer of

Your affectionate friend,

E. BICKERSTETH.

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CHAPTER X.

ENTRANCE INTO THE MINISTRY.

A. D. 1815.

THE worldly prosperity Mr. Bickersteth enjoyed at Norwich, did not extinguish the earnest wish to enter the ministry, which he had felt when a clerk in Mr. Bleasdale's office; while the sight of so many of the Lord's people in that city, wandering as sheep without a shepherd, quickened his desire to be employed in feeding the flock of Christ. In so important a step, however, he felt it "a duty to wait till Providence clearly opened a door." Such a door was opened in the year 1815. Difficulties arose in carrying on business on the principles which he and his partner had determined to follow, and he doubted whether duty would not compel him to leave Norwich. He opened his mind to Mr. Pratt, and sought his advice. Mr. Pratt had for several years conducted the whole business of the Church Missionary Society; but its operations were now extending so much, both at home and abroad, that he began to find the absolute need of assistance. He had known Mr. Bickersteth for many years, had watched his early labours in Spitalfields, and had witnessed his zeal and energy in establishing the Norwich Church Missionary Association. He felt that it was just such an

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assistant he needed in the important business of the Missionary Society; and he proposed to him that he should quit his present profession, seek ordination from the Bishop of Norwich, who, there was every reason to hope, would in this case dispense with the usual University course, come up to London to assist him in his ministry, and in the work of the Society, reside in the missionary house, and superintend the missionaries there. Thus all the difficulties, which seemed at one time so effectually to close his path, were about to be removed; he was exonerated from any gratuitous love of change, immediate employment was provided for him in the ministry, and there was a probability of his speedily receiving ordination. The hand of God seemed evident in all this. Yet he desired to avoid any thing like precipitation, and requested some time for thought. The following paper shows how carefully he weighed the reasons on each side.

July 24, 1815.

The providence of God having appeared to open the way for a most important change in my situation in life, I would now seriously consider whether the circumstances are such as to justify my leaving business, and entering the ministry.

WORLDLY REASONS AGAINST THE CHANGE.	ANSWERS.
I give up a comfortable situation, where I have a considerable income, a delightful home of my own, many kind friends, much ease and leisure.	These appear to me so many satisfactory evidences, that my motives are not worldly or carnal in the proposed change.
I go to a laborious situation in a close city, where it would	If I can more promote the glory of God there, the above

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be uncertain whether I had my health, and where my income would be small.	answer will be satisfactory to these objections.
I may be accused of love of change.	My own conscience is satisfied on this point. The change is disinterested.
My voice is weak.	Yet I doubt not it will be strong enough and clear enough for my work.
I have not had an University education, and this might be cast in my teeth.	If God has given me gifts and piety, this is very immaterial.
The peculiarity of my situation in the Missionary House.	Every situation must have its trials.
RELIGIOUS REASONS AGAINST THE CHANGE.	**ANSWERS.**
My present sphere of usefulness in the Missionary Societies.	I have great reason to thank God for it, but none, not to take a more important station, if God calls me to it.
The Missionary Societies.	I think Brereton will supply my place.
The Schools.	I think Miss W., and R. G., will do the same in the girls' schools, and Starling in the boys.'
The Benevolent.	I have really done nothing that any one else may not do without difficulty.
A centre for the Evangelical Clergy.	I hope Glover would amply supply this.
My insufficiency for the work to which I am called.	God is all-sufficient, and here is my only dependance.
Having a town congregation,	There must be ministers for

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and much business besides the ministry.

London; and the business in which I should engage would be entirely ministerial.

WORLDLY REASONS FOR IT.

I know none but those which the promises of God supply, to those who give up the world for the sake of His gospel, and the unsuitableness of the present state of my mind to the business in which I labour. Though I have trials, I should certainly have equal, if not greater, where I am going.

RELIGIOUS REASONS FOR IT.

I believe I am inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost, to take upon me this office. A faithful servant of God, in great want of help, in a most important station, calls upon me to assist him. He and another faithful servant consider me qualified for it. I surrender my judgment to theirs. A station, more important in every respect than the one I now occupy, calls me to London. The field is much larger; the whole of my time and mind could be given to that service, in which my heart delights, and I should have the constant society of eminent Christians.

I know the peculiar blessings given to those who turn many to righteousness; and though vile and weak in myself, God is my hope and my strength.

He also wrote to his parents, his brother, and several Christian friends. His friends all encouraged him to obey the call, and his parents felt that it was a case in which he and his wife must decide for themselves. A letter from Mr. Budd, his former minister, contains a valuable testimony to his religious character, from one who had had many opportunities of studying it.

"Are you adapted to such a situation? I think I

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should answer such a question decidedly in the affirmative. You are a man of a missionary spirit; you understand the importance and blessedness of a missionary work; it is dear to your soul. You enter into it with a peculiar spirit and feeling. You see the inestimable worth of souls, and mourn for the darkness of the heathen world, and rejoice in the dawn of this glorious day. So far, I should say, you were eminently suited for it; and then as to occasionally appearing in Mr. Pratt's pulpit, &c., why should you start at this? He is eminent, experienced; so are you, in the very best sense of these words. You are not a Christian of yesterday. You are not a minister of yesterday. You have long been a minister, without imposition of hands indeed, but acting under the indisputable and powerful motion of the Spirit. You have not administered the sacraments, or appeared in a pulpit before the great congregation; but you have performed all the functions of a minister except these, and what is still more, you have the light of life beaming in full radiance on your soul. Your heavenly knowledge is great: your heavenly enjoyments are great: your Christian experience is diversified and matured; and you may speak the revealed things of God, out of the ripe and yet ripening fulness of your own heart. Why then should you hesitate to undertake this part of the duty also? You know me well enough to know that I am merging what the world calls delicacy in the superior claim of Christian truth. What I have written above, I deem it my duty to have written: it is my estimation of your character, and it is not the hasty decision of a moment."

In answer to Mr. Pratt's proposal, Mr. Bickersteth wrote as follows:

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MY DEAR SIR,

Since you were kind enough to make the proposal you did, when I was in town, I have been seriously weighing the matter, and consulting several of my friends; and it has appeared to me more and more an opening of providence, which I ought to accept, though I still think it right to weigh the subject.

The great object of the Church Missionary Society has long had my earnest prayers, and the warmest desires of my heart; and I am persuaded I could enter with my whole mind into its plans and labours. But I must think, you are hardly at all aware how incompetent you would find me, and how much ignorance and weakness you would have to bear with. The only grounds of encouragement I can find, are the sufficiency and promises of God, and the constant aid of so experienced a guide as yourself.

It is important, however, that we should exactly understand the situation in which your kindness would place us, that we may be fully prepared for it; and that you should know every thing about us. (Then follow several details as to the duties to be attended to, domestic arrangements, &c. concluding with this characteristic sentence)—I am sure we all ought to be careful in the expenditure of money, so consecrated to the Lord, as the Society's money is.

Since I have mentioned my plans to my Christian friends here, they have been urging me not to leave Norwich on any account, and are trying to procure a situation for me in one of the churches here; but I see no opening for that, and I have some idea my ministry would not be so useful here, as where my former profession would be less known, a prophet not being without honour save in his own country. My parents would also, I know, be anxious to get me to Liverpool. I feel, however, earnestly desirous to be where God would have me to be; to have my will entirely conformed to His; and would earnestly pray, that my way may be made plain.

I have been reading carefully the Articles, Canons, and Liturgy, and after some doubts and difficulties, feel satisfied our Church

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holds no doctrine not contained in the Scriptures, and that her forms tend greatly to edification. My greatest doubt was, whether they did not identify Baptism and Regeneration,* and though I think their ideas were obscure on this subject, I am now satisfied, particularly from the Homily on Whitsunday, and the Article on Baptism, that they did consider them quite distinct. I am now going through the Homilies.†

I think there will probably not be much difficulty in getting ordained by the Bishop. Should my present sentiments continue, I purpose to get a letter to the Bishop, either from J. J. Gurney, or from Mr. H——, both of whom have considerable influence with him; and to go to him in about a fortnight, state my plans, and ask him if he can ordain me. I believe I could have a Norwich curacy for half-a-year, which would probably be a sufficient title. Should the Bishop agree to ordain me at Christmas, I would then immediately have a notice of Dissolution of Partnership inserted in the papers, and give my whole time, as soon as I could, to preparatory studies. I believe I should give up my house immediately, and take a cottage I can have, about two miles from Norwich. This would be necessary, as I could not otherwise escape business visitors, and interruptions of various kinds. I think the six months exercise of the ministry in Norwich, or a country-place, would be very important, previous to the taking of a situation in London.

I think I informed you, by mistake, I was twenty-seven. I was, however, twenty-nine last March. Perhaps also, I gave you too good an account of my strength. Much exertion with my voice fatigues me, as I have often found at the close of a Sabbath, after having been much with my schools, and gone through the family devotions; so that I do not consider my lungs strong.

* See 'Letters on Baptism,' published at the time of the Gorham controversy, for his most matured views.

† A paper containing his doubts, and the answers which satisfied his own mind, will show how carefully he studied the formularies of the Church, before venturing to take the Ordination vow. His love to his Church was strong in proportion to his full conviction of its scriptural character. See Appendix A.

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My income from business has been hitherto, I believe, about £800 a year, and the station of usefulness, in many respects, very important; but I feel the circumstances which I mentioned to you quite call upon me to leave my present situation.

In answer to this, Mr. Pratt wrote July 19th, 1815.

In proposing this place to you, I wished you to understand, that you would engage in an office and work of far higher importance than that of exercising the ministry alone. I should hardly recommend you to take a Norwich curacy. I should think one a few miles in the country would be better. But it would be really important that you should enter here as soon as possible, for I know not how I can get on. I am not able to encounter the load of business that presses on me. Possibly I shall have to spend next March and April in Ireland; and this it will be absolutely out of the question for me to attempt, if I am not by that time relieved. May our God guide you in your deliberations, and hear our prayers! The prospect of your uniting yourself to our work is a great relief to my mind in its present difficulties.

In the following letter Mr. Bickersteth informed Mr. Pratt of his first interview with the Bishop of Norwich.

Having been encouraged by an unexpected interview which J. J. Gurney had with the Bishop, in which, without my request or knowledge, he told him of my views, and his opinion of my character, I determined to lose no time in waiting upon his Lordship, and the result is perhaps as favourable as I could expect.

After I had explained my desire of entering the ministry, he dwelt upon the importance of an University education, and that it could only be dispensed with in particular cases. He then said, that all he had heard of me was in my favour, but he must make further inquiries; if those were satisfactory, and I went to a private clergyman for tuition *for a year and a half*, he might have no objection to ordain me. I told him, generally, how important it was to me

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to be ordained earlier, and that I had been accustomed to read a chapter frequently in the Greek Testament, and had lately attended to studies preparatory to the ministry. He said, "Perhaps you might be ordained by next Trinity, which would not be quite a year." I did not like to press the matter further as to time. He then asked me if I could refer him to any Norwich clergyman. I mentioned Mr. Stannard, and he said he would make enquiries of him. I told him, I thought it would be right to inform him I had published a small pamphlet; and I then put into his hands the "Help to the Study of the Scriptures." He approved my industry and diligence in writing it. He then recommended to me several books: Pearson on the Creed; Burnet on the Thirty-nine Articles; Tomline's Elements; Grotius, Pyle, and Clarke's Paraphrase. He dwelt on the necessity of being able to write Latin with correctness; and complained of the ignorance of many who came to him for ordination. In conclusion, he said, "I cannot commit myself till I have made further inquiries. I would not recommend you to give up your business at present, but pursue your studies in your leisure hours."

After requesting Mr. Pratt's advice on some points, Mr. Bickersteth proceeds:

Your kind proposal, from the very first, engaged my serious consideration; and after having weighed it in every point of view, and consulted valuable friends, and above all, having earnestly and continually sought Divine direction and guidance, I am persuaded I shall follow the leadings of God's providence in accepting it. I feel rather glad that the particular cause which induced me to think of a change, is less forcible now than it was, as it is the more satisfactory to my mind, that no worldly motive induced me to desire it. I go, not for worldly ease, honour, or profit, but I trust my conscience bears me witness, simply with a desire to be more useful to the cause of God. I perceive a long chain of providence in the course of the last six years, all tending in a remark-

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able degree to prepare me for such a situation as you have proposed to me. My mind was particularly directed to the state of the heathen, first, I believe by reading Brainerd's Life ; and soon after, by Buchanan's Sermon, I was led earnestly to pray for the heathen world, and that God would open a way for my becoming a minister. I consulted my friends, but every door seemed closed ; in about another year my prospect at Norwich opened, which seemed still more effectually to close the way ; but my desire remained, in a great degree, unabated, though sometimes more out of sight than at others. I endeavoured, however, implicitly to go in what appeared the present path of duty, and became settled in Norwich. Glad indeed I am, that my first desires were prevented. If God has now called me to the blessed office of serving Him with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, I trust the years that have passed will not have been lost, but that some measure of knowledge and experience will have been gained, that may be very profitable in my ministry, and in the particular situation in which your kindness would place me. I trust the sense of the immense value of immortal souls is not less impressed on me, whilst I am more acquainted with God's means of saving them. I have good reason to believe my place will be well supplied in Norwich. Brereton will take the Missionary Society, Bignold one school, and Starling another ; there are several who will supply my wife's place and mine in the Benevolent Societies ; thus my way seems made plain in these respects. I feel sometimes as if I should be weighed down with the burden of the immensely important concerns of the Missionary House ; the cause of the Church of England, and the character of the Evangelical clergy, and of the heathen world in general, so much rest on the management of affairs there. However, the throne of grace being ever accessible, and at the worst, being able to say, " Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me ; " and the comfort of acting under you, and being so much with you, cheer and support me. My wife has the same feelings and the same comfort. We are accustomed, from principle, to live economically ; and I think

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we may venture to say, the family would have the advantage of a pious and careful superintendent in my wife.

In a letter to his friend Rev. W. C. Wilson, he had mentioned the frequent desire he had felt to enter the ministry, and stated, "that latterly he had thought more seriously, whether he were not called to it." His friend replied, "Though overwhelmed with business, I snatch a moment to say, with what anxious feelings I heard you say that your mind was turned towards the ministry. I know that the Lord orders the goings of His children, and if, after much prayer and consideration, the prevailing bent of your mind is, to join the noble band of confessors for Christ, and if your sole motive is the glory of God, and the good of souls, which I have no doubt of, I feel a degree of certainty that God is preparing your heart. Have you ever thought, my dear friend, of going out as a Missionary? I know not why, but the moment I read your letter, I could not help looking on you as such. I considered, you have no family, your dear wife is united to you in spirit, and would cheer and comfort you. God has given you a remarkable degree of deadness and indifference to worldly comforts; you are of a very industrious turn, which would be a great help in learning the languages;—you are young, and yet have had considerable experience in divine things. Now it might look like enthusiasm to some, to pitch all at once upon my dear friend at Norwich for a Missionary, but my mind has been so full of the subject, that I cannot withhold my feelings. It is true that there is much for Missionaries to do in England, but the fields are white abroad, we want labourers to go forth. I have not the smallest doubt, Mr. Simeon could get you an Indian chaplaincy. But I

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see you and your wife laughing at my airy castle, and I will say no more. I will not forget to pray for you, that your way may be made plain."

In answer to this letter, Mr. Bickersteth wrote, telling his friend of the prospects that were now opening before him :—" I have indeed, seen in this," he continued, " that the Lord orders all the goings of His children ; and had I time to show the wheel within wheel by which my progress hitherto has been affected, you would abundantly see how gracious the Lord has been in the whole of this matter. I am myself greatly astonished at the events of the last month ; and shall indeed have to magnify the riches of divine grace, if one, so very unworthy of any mercy, has grace given him to preach the *unsearchable riches of Christ.* Oh ! if called to this honor, I trust *that* will ever be my darling theme ! Having so abundantly experienced them myself, I long to tell the glad tidings far and wide ; and to invite the poor, needy, and destitute sinner, to come, and taste, and see, that the Lord is gracious. You quite interest me by the account of your proceedings at Whittington. God abundantly prosper and increase your labours for His dear Son's sake. Remember that the motto of the Redeemer is, *He must increase ;* every soul added to His kingdom, is, as it were, so much additional strength, that will itself add more—more to the prayers of the Church, to the communion of saints, to the extension of the kingdom of Christ, to the happiness of man, and to the joy of heaven. I like your weekly meetings. How these things must gladden the heart of your excellent father !

" You will easily see that I have now a great work before me in every respect. The mere preparation for the

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examination is of importance, to one who has so much neglected Latin and Greek as I have; but the still more important work of the ministry is much upon my mind. I beg earnestly, you and your dear wife will give me your prayers, that I may have the unction of the Holy Ghost, which alone can make me 'an able minister of the New Testament.'"

The airy castle of his friend was to be, in some measure, realized sooner than he imagined. In August, Mr. Bickersteth received the following letter from Mr. Pratt:

August 9, 1845.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I would have written to you earlier, in reply to yours of July 28, had not very important reasons delayed my answer. Since I received yours, we have had communications made to us, which will render a visit to our African settlements, by a friend in full possession of the views and wishes of the Committee, absolutely necessary. A committee has met to-day on the subject; I have read to them your last letter. It is the unanimous wish of the Committee that you would render the Society this most seasonable and important service. [He then states the probability of three schoolmasters and schoolmistresses starting, at the end of September, and suggests, that if Mr. Bickersteth accompanied them, there might be less difficulty in his obtaining ordination on his return.] Mrs. B. will perhaps start at the first proposal of this measure. But I assure you, my dear friend, that were I circumstanced as you are, and were possessed of all the bearings of the subject of which I am now in possession, not a single moment would I hesitate, but would say, "Here am I, Lord send me!" Never were you called to so important a service. You need not dissolve your partnership before you return, if you and Bignold so please. I thought of asking you to come to town to meet the Committee, and talk the whole matter over, but I write

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first to sound you. If you feel drawn to this work of charity, make arrangements, and come to me. Let all be done and felt in faith. Give me an answer as soon as possible. You may be sure that I feel the vast importance of what is now proposed, since I am willing to forego your assistance here for so long a time.

Ever yours,

J. PRATT.

To this letter Mr. Bickersteth replied :

MY DEAR SIR,

Having had a little more time to consider the last very important proposal you made, I feel very desirous of communicating to you some further things which have occurred to me.

I really think you can have had very little opportunity of judging of my capacity for such an office. You have seen me only in favourable situations. You have only the opinions of those who have done the same, as Mr. Budd and Mr. Cooper. Under these circumstances, my chief fear is that the great office you set before me would be very inadequately performed.

Again, you are not aware that, through Bignold's kindness, I have left business, and have entirely devoted the last ten days to study, and I hope was making considerable progress in Latin; so that I begin to read it with some degree of ease, and to find composition less difficult. I was satisfied I could have been prepared for Orders by Christmas, and had flattered myself with the prospect of gaining considerable information, as I was able to give nine hours in the day to study.

My dearest and excellent wife feels this matter deeply, but feels it as a Christian. She says, if I must go, she is exceedingly desirous of going with me; she cannot bear the thought of such a separation. I see that the risk and expense would be just doubled by this, and my cares and anxieties considerably increased, and therefore I do not wish it on her account; though I cannot refuse her inclination, if it be decided I go, and the Committee approve of

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her going with me. Under all circumstances the Committee must decide what is the most expedient course, and, through God's grace, I will abide by your decision. If I go, I shall come up to town for a day or two, immediately, with my wife.*

In this letter he expresses his wish to be ordained, if possible, before starting for Africa, and desires that arrangements might be made, during his absence, for a female servant, who had been converted to God in his family, and had become much attached to them.

Mr. Pratt's answer is as follows:

August 12*th*, 1815.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

In reply to your enquiry on the necessity of your going to Africa, I would have sent you, by this post, a copy of a letter which I yesterday sent off to Mr. ——, had not yours of this morning satisfied me, that you will take my word for the necessity. The instant you see it, you will acknowledge that duty calls us to send thither a friend.

On the subject of your qualification for this mission, you must give me credit, my dear friend, that I have not proposed it to you rashly, but after much thought and fervent prayer. If it will give you any confidence, in the midst of those apprehensions concerning yourself, which I confess I am not sorry to see,—I will say, that my mind, distressed and distracted as it has been by the events which have occurred, reposes with comfort and confidence in the hope that you will execute this labour of love.

Accusations and insinuations are brought forward against some of the Missionaries, which it is absolutely necessary should be examined into on the spot, by some one representing the Society. You

* These letters of Mr. Bickersteth are taken from rough copies of his answers to Mr. Pratt, enclosed with Mr. Pratt's correspondence; the above letter is left unfinished.

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will, of course, speak of this subject generally to your friends, that the extent and importance of the African mission, and the difficulties which attend it, require such a visitation as that in question.

August 15th, 1815. I had written the above, when I thought it would be best to wait for the judgment of the Committee which met yesterday. I would have sent you the result last night, but was worn out with fatigue.

We had a full Committee. Our African affairs brought to town our noble president, so that we had the benefit of his Lordship's counsel.

You will be grieved to hear, that I had to lay before the Committee the afflicting intelligence of the death of Mrs. Butscher, by a fever brought from America, in a vessel lately arrived at Sierra Leone. The Committee will, in all probability, defer the sending out of their schoolmasters, till they hear that this fever is not prevalent. Of course they will not think of asking you to go, while any danger shall appear. Suppose, therefore, that you stay—say till the end of November, would it not be well for me to write to the Bishop of Norwich, or shall I leave it till I can speak to his Lordship?

The Committee all feel (and I am sure you will believe me when I say, that I take the lead in this respect among them) for your dear wife, in the projected temporary separation; but her being with you, particularly if she should be indisposed, would so occupy your mind, that you would feel greatly embarrassed in your exertions; we hope, therefore, that she will believingly give you up to Him, in whose service you will so specially engage. . . . It would be most desirable for you to go out ordained.

I am, ever yours, my dear Friend,

JOSIAH PRATT.

Matters being so far settled, Mr. Bickersteth wrote to inform his parents of the projected mission. It was the first time he had ever taken an important step without

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their sanction. His mother was still suffering from the effects of the paralytic stroke, and his father was not at this time able to appreciate the motives, which led his son to count every sacrifice light for the glory of Christ. He wrote, therefore, expressing his regret, and telling him, it was the first letter they had received from him, which had caused them any uneasiness or regret. He also expressed his disappointment, that instead of the comfortable situation which he thought had been provided for him in London, he should be required so soon to go out to Africa, and his fears lest he should be called on frequently to repeat the visit, or to reside entirely in that unhealthy climate. Mr. Bickersteth endeavoured, in his reply, to remove these anxieties, and also to prove to his parents that it was no want of consideration for them, which had led him to deviate from his usual practice, and to act without seeking for their advice.

My dearest father is quite mistaken about my being required to go. It was merely proposed to me, and, after mature deliberation, I cheerfully accepted it. So far from feeling it as a burden, I am persuaded we ought all to rejoice in it; you, that your son is thus permitted to serve Christ, and I, that I am allowed this mode of testifying my love to Him. What are our principles of religion, dearest father, worth, if they will not enable us cheerfully to make sacrifices of this kind? Nor is it in any degree likely to be a permanent or frequent thing. My dearest wife, with the tenderest feelings of affection, sees it my plain duty to go, and willingly gives me up to God. Be assured, my dearest father, I see nothing but mercies in my late changes. I was telling my dearest Sarah, I would not change the situation which I hope for, as a minister of Christ's gospel, with the highest, the most wealthy, or powerful in the world; and I have had more happiness since the prospect of it

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opened, and since I made up my mind to undertake the visit to Africa, than ever I remember to have enjoyed before... .. I do not decide without deliberation, without prayer, nor without the warmest love to my dearest parents, second only to that I owe to my Saviour. But I feel there are cases in which you can have no voice, because they are between God and my own conscience. Such a case is the voyage to Africa. I would not distress your minds, therefore, by asking your opinion before I decided.

The following extract from a letter to his sister, breathes the same spirit of heavenly joy. Alluding to his removal from Norwich to London, he wrote :—" It will only be a change of employment, the same Jesus will be with us, perhaps nearer than ever, and we shall be more wholly serving Him.

" O my dear Mary, what happiness is equal to that of the Christian ! every temporal, every spiritual want supplied, all the Saviour's fulness is his, he is rich in Christ ; thus he journeys on, Christ his companion, the Spirit his comforter, heaven his home. The rain may descend, and the winds may blow, but he has always a hiding-place and a refuge ; as he advances, he sees more clearly that inheritance which is incorruptible and undefiled, and he is daily made more meet for it. The Saviour has engaged to hold up his goings in his paths, and he shall not slip ; he shall never perish, and at length an abundant entrance shall be ministered unto him. And is it true, my sister, that we have an interest in all this ? how happy, how inexpressibly happy Christ has made us ! what can we do enough for Him ? How earnest should we be, that every living creature should share our bliss ! It is this, I trust, which influences me to desire the ministry. I long to set before sinners the full, unsearchable, and amazing riches

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of Christ, and to beseech them, by every plea and argument, to be reconciled to God.

"I feel giving up the dear children," (his schools) "but I leave it with Christ, and He will provide. I have no doubt that my place will be well supplied in all those things, in which God has used me as His instrument."

Some attempts were made to prejudice the Bishop of Norwich against him. Mr. Pratt wrote thus, Aug. 26:

I lose no time in informing you that a letter came this morning from the Bishop. He says, he has been cautioned against you, by men of great respectability, as somewhat more remarkable for zeal than learning, &c. He advises me to have some friendly conversation with you; and it will do no harm, his Lordship, with excellent temper, adds, "to point out to him the expediency of endeavouring to steer, in the performance of his professional offices, between the extremes of heated enthusiasm and lukewarm indifference, or he may hereafter be the cause of exposing me to censure, for laying hands upon him too hastily. Having said thus much, I shall only add, that I see at present no adequate reason, (notwithstanding the intimations I have received) which will induce me to start any objection against the appearance of Mr. Bickersteth, as a candidate for Deacon's orders at my next Ordination, on the tenth of December;—if, upon enquiry I find him (what I now firmly believe him to be) a young man of genuine piety, considerable attainments, and of a moral character irreproachable."* Now, my dear Friend, thank God, and mind your studies. I should advise you to withdraw from observation. There is a whisperer, you see, but that was to be expected. I shall write to the Bishop to thank him. You may be sure, God willing, of ordination at his next time.

* The Bishop had before said to a friend, he much preferred Mr. Bickersteth's piety to a University education; and he was so much impressed with the importance of the work he was carrying on in Norwich, that he solemnly urged him to consider whether pious laymen were not even more needed in that day than pious clergymen.

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Mr. Bickersteth finding it almost impossible to carry on quiet study in Norwich, retired for a time to a cottage at Catton, two miles from the town. Some extracts from his correspondence will show the state of his mind at this important crisis of his life. He wrote, November 2, to his parents, and, after telling them how he had got his testimonials and other papers ready for ordination, added—

I commit the whole of the matter to God, praying first, that I may be sent and qualified of Him, and then duly sent by man, to preach the glorious gospel to sinners. Our dear sisters will, I know, do all they can to cheer and comfort my beloved wife, who begins to be a good deal depressed by the prospect of our separation. God, I doubt not, who comforteth them that are cast down, will support us under this heaviest part of the trial, and especially by the consideration, that it is a good thing to give up any and every thing for Christ. If it be God's will that I am ordained, I am invited to preach on the afternoon of the same day, at St. Gregory's, on Wednesday at Wymondham, on Thursday, at St. Lawrence, and Mr. Pratt wants me to be in town that week. I expect, you see, plenty of work, but I know the work is worthy, the labour for such a Master as Christ its own reward. I am persuaded, also, that He who finds work, will furnish strength and grace to enable me to go through it; were it not for this hope, I should utterly despond in the prospect of the great work before me. I do hope, my Christian friends will uphold and strengthen me by their persevering and united prayers. The Norwich Ladies' Association have determined, that I shall have the pleasure of choosing a namesake in Africa. I am to choose a boy, to be called after my name, whom they will maintain and educate. I have received many testimonies of affection from my friends here.

To his elder sister he wrote November 22—

I am preparing as diligently as I can for orders, but I have many things to repress my ardent pursuit of mere *classical* prepa-

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ration; yet I trust, not of that spiritual preparation, which, after all, makes the minister. This is what I want. I want not, my sister, a name; I want not earthly glory, power, or wealth, but I do want to be wise to win souls. I do want to be the honoured instrument of bringing souls to Christ, and in time, to happiness and heaven; and for this I know God alone can enable and prepare me. If, by any change of circumstances, I shall be the happy means of leading one more soul to Christ than I should have done in my late situation, I shall indeed be abundantly rewarded, whatever earthly prospects or property I part with.

Speaking of his expected voyage, he continues:

It is quite uncertain when I go, or from what place. My mind is, thank God, composed, and I think I can say, my heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. I know I have chosen the good part, and I am not afraid of any consequences.

This holy calmness of spirit was not unbroken by fears and anxieties, which he thus unbosoms, together with his hopes and joys, to his intimate friend Mr. Cooper.

Norwich, Nov. 28, 1815.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I gladly seize a few moments to answer your kind letter, and open something of my heart to a dear and valued friend. Surely, if any heart ought to overflow with thankfulness and gratitude to the Father of mercies, and at the same time to be abased in the dust, in the sense of its own sinfulness and poverty, mine ought. When I look back, I cannot but say, "Surely goodness and mercy have followed me." When I look forward, the prospect of so many prayers being answered, and such fields of usefulness opened, does, I think, excite, even in my cold heart, some feelings of gratitude and love. O what a Master we serve! let us, my friend, be zealous, very zealous in His cause. Yet whilst you and I feel this, I have many shameful heart-sinkings, many unbelieving fears, robbing me of much comfort. I am not afraid of opening my

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heart to you. I tremble at the prospect of examination before Ordination, and fear lest I should not get through, or not get through in a manner worthy of the profession I have made. I tremble, lest by inconsistency I should dishonour that holy office I am about to take upon me. I tremble at my own insufficiency for it. I am anxious about the sermons I am to preach in Norfolk; and I still more fear, how the spirit of religion will live in my heart in the bustle of London, and in the voyage to Africa. Hear me, Lord Jesus! O pray for me, that I may cast them simply upon the Lord, and not look at myself, but at His fulness alone. I never felt so deeply before, what a poor, needy, empty creature I am in myself. To God be glory for this, I desire to feel it more and more; that boasting may be excluded utterly, and all glory be given to God alone, that I may trust in His righteousness, and go forth in His strength only. I have told you, my dear friend, the state of my mind, in the persuasion that, at this peculiarly important season, I may have your special prayers. I am persuaded God has heretofore heard your prayers for me, and that He will again do so.

I expect, if it be God's gracious will, to be ordained December 10th. May the Lord open my mind to the full view of His truth; I wish to preach, as standing on the borders of eternity, and seeing sinners ready to perish around me. As to your own entrance into the ministry, my valued friend, be assured, God will make your way plain in it, and if your heart is drawn in prayer to it, I doubt not, in the good time, it will be accomplished, (if you go in the present path of duty). Thus it has graciously been with me; and God never gives a spirit of prayer, but, however long the answer may be delayed, it will come, and though it tarry, wait for it.

But I must conclude with affectionate remembrances to the dear friends around you; believe me, in the best of bonds, those of Christian love—always yours,

E. BICKERSTETH.

His fears as to his examination proved wholly needless. "I passed through it," he wrote to his parents, "very

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comfortably, without embarrassment, and to the perfect satisfaction of the examiner. I stated some of the great doctrines of the Bible, translated the Greek Testament, Grotius, and a Latin article, and wrote a Latin and also an English theme. I feel now as if a weight were removed, and I could give my whole mind, more completely, to the far more important preparation of spirit for so great a work as the ministry. I do hope I have all your prayers in this. I think I have, if I may judge of the state of my own mind, which, through the grace of God, is kept calm, and relying on Him, in the midst of those very great changes that are taking place in my situation. I trust Jesus Christ is putting me into the ministry, and I trust in Him alone to enable me to be faithful. I had many churches offered me to preach in, to-morrow after the ordination. I am to take Brereton's duty. There is a considerable congregation, and I feel the weight and burden; but know now, I trust, more than ever, where to look for strength, and whose grace is sufficient for me.

"I had a painfully-pleasing farewell visit to the Gurney family last night. The interest these kind friends have taken in my affairs has been quite remarkable. I have seemed like a member of their family leaving them.

"Dear Mary's letter, which I had not received when I wrote to her, was quite cheering. Tell her, however, it is more difficult, and therefore more glorious, to fight against daily sins and overcome them, than even to go to Africa for Christ. There is much to support one in the name and appearance of the thing in the latter case; whilst the former is a daily self-denying duty, which

* See Appendix.

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nothing but continual supplies of Divine grace can enable us to perform."

On Sunday, December 10, 1815, he was ordained Deacon at Norwich, and preached his first sermon at St. Gregory's church in the afternoon of the same day. The following resolutions are recorded in his journal:

"December 10, 1815. This day I was ordained, and on this day I have appeared before the great congregation to declare the truths of the everlasting Gospel. What truly important events of my life!

"Now let me, looking for Divine strength, determine, as much as may be, on some plan for my future labours. First, before I compose a sermon, earnestly to seek Divine grace, and strive to illuminate my own mind, and sanctify my own heart, in and by the truth.

"2ndly. To be watching for suitable texts for sermons. and keeping them before me in a list.

"3rd. Always, if any way possible, to spend a considerable time in prayer to God before I go out to preach. It is this alone, that will give my sermons the true spirit; let me go from my closet to the pulpit.

"4th. Let it be my constant aim to preach Christ, and consider every thing with respect to Him. Let me retire from the pulpit to my study, and there pour out my heart for the people to whom I have preached; and oh! may God keep me from pride, self-conceit, desire of human applause, and every thing which would have the least tendency to self-exaltation.* I cannot but be grateful

* Before his son's ordination, in warning him against ministerial temptations, he told him, how he had ever found this the chief, lest being the centre of an affectionate congregation, where all were eager to show their attachment, he should work for their esteem and love, rather than for that of his Lord.

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for God's amazing goodness in carrying me through every difficulty. He has indeed mercifully defended and blessed me; to Him be all the glory. Oh that I may now be rightly affected with the multitude of additional ties, by which I am bound to a life of holiness. My God, let thy Spirit work a due sense of these things in my heart, that I may wisely and simply give myself unto Thee!"

The commission given to the Apostle Paul, was the subject of Mr. Bickersteth's first sermon. "I send thee to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God," &c. Acts xxvi. 17, 18. The congregation was very large; for his ordination had excited much interest in Norwich, and numbers crowded "to hear the lawyer preach." And now, as one long held back from a work in which his heart delighted, he entered with full impulse of soul on his new and blessed office, no labours seeming to him too abundant. He preached again on Tuesday at St. Lawrence's, Norwich, to a full congregation, "The people," he wrote to his parents, "seemed uncommonly attentive. I really quite enjoyed preaching to them, and felt an earnest desire for their salvation. My text was Mal. iv. 2. I am to preach again to-night (Wednesday) at Wymondham. I can hardly tell you how comfortable I have been in all my way hitherto, though I know I must rejoice with trembling. The Bishop of Norwich, in the kindest and handsomest way possible, gave me letters dimissory to Gloucester, and I am to be there ordained Priest on Thursday the 21st, if the Lord permit. This at once relieves me from all the burden of further preparation for examinations, and of anxiety about being ordained Priest. The Lord be praised! I sought Him, and He heard me and answered

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my prayers ; and I doubt not, my dear friends at Liverpool will see, in this, answers to their prayers also.

"If I stay in Norwich, I shall probably preach again on Friday, and twice again on Sunday. You cannot conceive how much more congenial this is to my feelings than my former occupations. O that I may remember all the awful responsibilities it brings upon me! Pray for me, that the more the Lord thus graciously blesses me, the more simply and wholly I may give myself to Him, and glory in Him, and in Him alone."

The nature of Mr. Bickersteth's mission to Africa made it desirable that he should, if possible, be previously admitted to full orders, and will account for the very short time which elapsed between his two ordinations. It must be remembered, also, that though but a few months were nominally devoted to preparation for the ministry, and though he held the probationary office of deacon but a few days, his whole life had for many years been one course of preparation. He was not (to borrow Mr. Budd's expression) "a minister of yesterday." Works of divinity, of which he had already collected a considerable library, had for years been his almost exclusive study; his favourite mental exercise had been the composition of sermons, and his leisure hours had been diligently employed in fulfilling the duties of a deacon ; relieving the poor, and teaching the ignorant.

From Gloucester he wrote, December 20 :

Hitherto the Lord hath helped me, I may well say, and gladly confide all the future to Him. I got comfortably through my three sermons last Sunday; much interest was manifested towards me,

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and I had some difficulty in getting away from the many kind friends, who surrounded me with prayers and good wishes. As soon as I got to this place, I waited on the Bishop's Secretary with my letters dimissory, was introduced to the Bishop, and have had some very interesting conversation with him. He invited me to dine with him to-day, and I am to do so at five o'clock. I am, God willing, to be ordained Priest to-morrow. As to the future, my mind is, I trust, kept in perfect peace, being stayed on God. He has wonderfully helped me through many difficulties, and I doubt not will, through the prayers of many, continue to do so. I shall not soon, I trust, forget His many mercies in Norfolk. The Wymondham meeting on Wednesday evening was peculiarly interesting. I had especially asked their prayers, and many came round to me after the meeting, to shake hands with me, and tell me they would pray for me.

On the 26th of December he wrote again to his parents from London:

Every thing went on as comfortably as possible at Gloucester, and I got back to London on Friday morning. I preached twice on Sunday, and twice on Christmas-day,* and God mercifully carried me through both days. I received the instructions for my voyage at a public meeting of the Committee this morning. I feel the great importance of my present situation; many eyes are upon me,

*Thus he preached ten times between December 10, and Christmas, Dec. 25. In London he repeated three of his Norfolk sermons.

Dec. 10. Acts xxvi. 18. St. Gregory's, Norwich.
12. Mal. iv. 2, St. Lawrence, Norwich.
13. Rev. i. 5. Wymondham.
17. Prov. xxii. 4. St. Gregory's, Norwich.
„ Jer. iii. 1. St. Lawrence, Norwich.
„ Rev. xxii. 3. Thorne, Norwich.
24. Acts xxvi. 18. Wheler Chapel.
„ Rev. xxii. 3. St. Mary Woolnoth.
25. Mal. iv. 2. Wheler Chapel.
„ Luke ii. 10. St. Mary Woolnoth.

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and the cause of God in the advancement of the Gospel of His Son is committed to me. I would earnestly pray, that as my day is, so my strength may be, and I have much hope in the prayers of Christ and His people.

I shall write whenever I have opportunity. I commit my dearest earthly treasure to you, in my beloved Sarah, the loss of whose society will be one of the most serious of my trials.

Whatever, beloved parents, be the result of this undertaking, be satisfied I am in the path of duty now, and I humbly look for the Divine blessing in all the events of it.

A voyage to Africa was, thirty-five years ago, a far more serious undertaking than it would be now, and the mortality which had prevailed among the Missionaries had invested its Western shores with peculiar terror. His family could not therefore part with him without some anxiety. From his sisters, however—those sisters whose spiritual welfare he had so earnestly sought—he was now to receive strength and encouragement. "Indeed I never loved you so well," wrote one, "as now that you are giving up all for the kingdom of God's sake; but I trust He will, as we know He can, make it much more than all up to you, and that 'when you are passing through the deep waters He will be with you,' and that He will be 'a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall.' Mine are poor weak prayers, but indeed they are fervently offered up for you, that you may be made the honoured instrument of much usefulness, and that you may, if it please God, soon return to us, in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of peace."

The beloved sister who preceded him but a few months in his entrance to glory, wrote thus:

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MY VERY DEAR EDWARD,

Though it is probable you may never receive my letters, yet I cannot but risk a few lines, as you request one of us to write; a request from you is become both dear and sacred to us, as you will soon be removed so far from us. O what a blessed thing we feel it now to be in Christ; though separate, yet not separate; though absent, yet present; though mighty waters intervene; yet in Him we are intimately united still. Sometimes I dwell upon the happy probability of our meeting in Liverpool next summer, and then a misgiving thought arises, What if we should see him no more! Well, my beloved brother, I know that to you to live is Christ, and to die would be unspeakable gain, and we are following very fast, to occupy the mansions prepared for us in our Father's house. At times I feel so weary of this body of sin and death, that I long for the time when it will lie in the grave, and be no more a hindrance to the then disencumbered spirit; but, I believe, this is a cowardly feeling, which is afraid of having to strive against sin even unto blood; as soldiers, we must fight till the battle be won; as servants, we must work until the night cometh; as stewards, we must be faithful unto the end.* What animating words those are, which St. Paul uttered when he said; "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." We cannot cease to remember you, my dear Edward, in our prayers, that God may make you an instrument of turning many to righteousness.

His mother, with a hand still trembling from the effects of her paralytic stroke, traced a few lines in a letter,

* Grace was given to this beloved sister to fight till the battle was won. A long course of suffering was before her. For twenty years before her death, she was confined to her sofa by ill health, but the same energy which marked her brother's public career, characterised her sick chamber. From that sofa, she not only educated her family, and regulated her household, but by the life and unailing buoyancy of her spirit, diffused joy and cheerfulness over the whole domestic circle, till her sun set in unclouded brilliancy, and a triumphant death closed her blessed and useful career.

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which enclosed some bands of her own making. "I wish," she concluded, "I could be as calm as you are about your going to Africa; but I hope the sooner the voyage is commenced, the sooner it will be over. May the Almighty protect and be with you, is the sincere prayer of your affectionate mother." "My dear Edward," his father continued, "will, I am sure, set a high value on the above lines from his dear mother, which is more than she has written at one time since her illness. The latter part of it has cost her many tears. May the Almighty give a blessing to, and prosper, all your labours in His service."

Thus graciously did the Lord deal with His servant, and when calling him to make special sacrifices in His service, support him, not only with a special sense of His own presence, but with the choicest consolations of Christian sympathy and domestic affection.

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CHAPTER XI.

VISIT TO AFRICA.

A. D. 1816.

THE Mission on which Mr. Bickersteth left his native country was important and responsible. Nearly twelve years had elapsed since the Society had sent its first Missionaries to the shores of Africa. These years had been a season of trial and disappointment. It pleased God, that in Africa, as in many other lands, His people should sow in tears, before they were permitted to reap in joy. Many labourers had fallen victims to the deadly climate, and no remarkable success attended the efforts of those who were left. The Natives, whose only intercourse with Europeans had been through the medium of the slave-trade, were completely debased by its pernicious influence. They desired nothing but gain and traffic, from the Missionaries who came to offer them instruction. These discouragements, the difficulty of acquiring the Native languages, the dangers of the climate, &c., had so disheartened the Missionaries, that they had almost given up preaching to the adults, and confined their attention to the schools in the settlements;—thus almost abandoning the Society's great object, of proclaiming the Gospel to the heathen. At the schools the children were

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wholly removed from their heathen parents, and clothed and boarded at the expense of the Society. Many of them made great progress; the schools were as green spots in a desert land, but even they were attended with many difficulties. The Missionary, having so large a number to provide for, was entangled with the cares of this life, and, without much watchfulness and prudence, was liable to incur needless and heavy expences. Some system of supervision was necessary, to protect the Society against the errors of judgment, into which any one of their Missionaries might fall. Circumstances, also, had much changed since the first establishment of the Mission. The Susoos, a tribe settled on the Rio Pongas, seemed then to offer the most promising field for Missionary exertion; but since that time the colony of Sierra Leone had risen in importance; captured slave-ships were continually bringing in cargoes of Natives from all parts of the coast;—and the Governor was anxious that the strength of the Mission should be directed to this point, where so many heathen were already assembled under British protection. All these circumstances rendered it desirable that a visitor from England should inspect the Mission; but the necessity was rendered far more imperative, from dissensions which had arisen among the Missionaries themselves; accusations had been sent home against some of their number, which it was essential to examine on the spot.

Mr. Bickersteth's instructions were, to converse privately with all connected with the Mission, and, if he judged it requisite, to assemble them together, to gain their united opinion on points of importance, and thus to obtain all the information he could, from heathen chiefs,

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and from any credible persons in the colony or settlements. He was to ascertain the character of the Missionaries, their manner of conducting the Mission, the influence they exercised, the character of the schools, the number of schoolmasters required in the colony; the eligibility of various posts as Missionary stations, and several other points connected with the spiritual and temporal welfare of the Mission. He had authority, if he judged it requisite, to suspend or remove any one connected with the Mission; wherever he discovered imperfections and evils, he was to apply the proper remedies. "He was to strengthen the weak, to comfort the dejected, to endeavour to become all things to all men." "We doubt not," concluded Mr. Pratt in his instructions, "but that you will exercise your best judgment in all things, without partiality, and in the fear of God. Your ready surrender of your own feelings, that you might render this service to our great cause, is a pledge that you will strive, in every possible way, to execute it faithfully, and with wisdom. We will not cease to pray, that your health and comfort may be taken under the special protection of your Heavenly Master; that He would graciously order all the circumstances of your voyage, your visit and your return, that He would grant you holy joy and perfect peace in believing;—that He would bestow on you that wisdom which is profitable to direct and guide your mind in all its determinations; that He would give you acceptance among all, with whom you may have intercourse; that He would bestow His blessing on all your endeavours, and render your visit of lasting benefit to the Society's designs of love towards Africa; and that He would finally restore you to us, and to your affectionate relatives, in peace and safety, and continue

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you many years as a labourer and fellow-helper among us, in that post of service to which you and your beloved partner have dedicated your days."

Signed, JOSIAH PRATT.
Secretary.

Church Missionary House,
December 26th, 1815.

He felt very deeply the responsibility of an office, which demanded so much firmness, tenderness, heavenly wisdom, and discernment of spirits, as regarded the Missionaries themselves, and so much judgment and prudence connected with the details of the work to be assigned to them. His answer to the Committee was as follows:

GENTLEMEN;—

Having been called upon to prepare for the voyage before me so much earlier than was expected, I must content myself with a short reply to your important instructions. I desire simply to state the feelings of my mind.

I do trust that my first feeling is, that of gratitude to the Father of mercies, who has called me, for a season, to give up anything for that blessed Lord, who gave up His life for me, and thus to afford some testimony of my sense of His wonderful love, in dying for me, and for all mankind. But, indeed, it is not much to do that for Him, which the Sailor, the Merchant, or the Officer do willingly and cheerfully, either for the gain of this world, for the love of human applause, or from the mere wish for change.

While, however, I desire to be grateful to God, I cannot but feel the awful importance of the work before me, and, in many respects, my utter unfitness and unworthiness for such a Mission: and, had not my path been made, as I trust, so clear that I could not mistake it, I should have been often tempted, on this ground, to desire not to be called to this service.

My only hope is in Him, who has hitherto blessed me. He

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has often heard and answered my prayers, carried me through trying circumstances, and delivered me out of difficulties; and He will, I trust, yet incline me to call upon Him, and hear me when I call.

I feel supported, too, in the full conviction, that the work in which we are engaged is peculiarly dear to our Lord; that it is the travail of His soul, of which He shall see and be satisfied;—and therefore that the time shall come, when Africa—poor, and degraded, and wretched, as it now may be—shall be full of those who enjoy Christian feelings and Christian happiness.

Yet let me entreat you not to expect much. It may be the will of the Lord to humble us; and that I may return, having accomplished little or nothing. It may be the will of the Lord that I never reach Africa, or never return from it. At any rate, I feel that preparation for the disappointment of our own plans, if mixed with faith and confidence in the ultimate fulfilment of the promises of God, is our duty in a world like this, where the ways of God are so different from our ways, and His thoughts from our thoughts. Should it be His will that I do not return, let none think that therefore it was wrong to go, or that I regretted having gone. I can truly say, I have already enjoyed such peace and satisfaction in this matter, as abundantly to recompense me; and, whatever be the result, I am satisfied it was your duty to send me, and it was my duty to go.

I commend myself to your prayers—I earnestly ask you to give me your prayers, so that I may have Christian wisdom, faith, self-denial, humility, courage, and love. Next to the prayers of the great Intercessor, much of my hope is in the prayers of His servants. They never have fallen, they never will fall, in vain to the ground. It may thus please God to honour the weakest and the humblest instrument, that He himself may have all the glory.

E. BICKERSTETH.

Mr. Bickersteth left London for Deal, on Friday, December 29th. Mr. Pratt and Mrs. Bickersteth accom-

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panied him; he expected to sail the following day, but the ship was detained till January 3rd. The additional opportunity thus afforded, of intercourse with Mr. Pratt, was very valuable to him. His friends left him on the 2nd of January, and the following letter to his wife, containing a selection of texts for her use, was written the same evening.

Deal, January 2nd, 1816.

MY BELOVED WIFE,

Now I have lost you, I can find nothing to which my heart more naturally turns than writing to you; and, as I know not but that in the morning I may be called to go on board the Salisbury, before I have time to write, I determined to begin a letter this evening. I have felt more, my dearest S., in parting with you, than in parting with all besides. . . . Yet we may be much comforted and encouraged, as we have been, in knowing for whom we give up each other. O may that beloved, adored Master, our Maker and our Saviour, be the husband, the refuge, the joy, and the strength of my wife! I do think and believe He will, by His Holy Spirit, comfort us, and bless all His dispensations towards us to our own good, and the good of His Church.

I have looked over your interesting selection of texts. They will do for the whole time of my absence, by taking one for the same day in each month. I will now add a list for you, my dearest S., and may the Spirit who can give them power and efficacy make them truly profitable.

1. 2 Cor. iv. 17.
2. Isa. xliii. 2.
3. Luke xxi. 19.
4. Psalm xlvi. 1.
5. Isa. ii. 22.
6. Ps. xvi. 5.
7. Col. ii. 10.
8. Phil. ii. 9.
9. Heb. iv. 9.
10. Heb. iv. 11.
11. Isa. liv. 5.
12. Lam. iii. 25.
13. Jonah ii. 7.
14. Micah vii. 18, 19.
15. Nahum i. 7.
16. 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30.
17. Mark v. 36.
18. John xvi. 33.
19. Rev. vii. 14.
20. Rev. xxii. 17.
21. Rom. xv. 30—32.
22. Gal. v. 9.
23. Eph. vi. 19.
24. Phil. i. 29.
25. 2 Tim. iv. 22.
26. Philemon 4.
27. 1 Pet. v. 7.
28. Heb. xiii. 6.
29. Heb. iii. 17, 18.
30. Phil. ii. 24.
31. Ezek. xxxv. 37.

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I shall, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, think much of you, and pray much for you. I have felt called upon to give you up for a season for the service of Christ, but think not on that account I love you the less. You never, never were more dear to me. When we meet again, may it be in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. In the mean time, my love, let us glorify God, by a cheerful acquiescence in His will in this painful separation. I beg you to beware of despondency; trust your God with me, and however dark things may seem, "be not afraid, only believe." God will try your faith, and reward it also. "Delight thyself in the Lord, and He shall give thee the desires of thy heart." Let us each chiefly be anxious, not about each other's personal safety, but that we may ourselves fulfil, and strengthen each other to fulfil, all the great duties which are before us. May the Lord Himself direct, cheer, and console you, prays

Your ever faithful and affectionate husband,

E. BICKERSTETH.

On the 5th of January the ship was driven by contrary winds into Portsmouth, where they were detained till the 24th. Such a delay, at the outset of his journey, was a trial of faith, but God overruled it for much good. He was thrown here into a valuable circle of Christian friends, —abundant work was provided for him; he preached eight times, and heard afterwards, that in several cases his ministry had been blessed of God. In after-years he often alluded to this circumstance, as a proof how God brings good out of that which, at the moment, seems most trying. He wrote thus at the time to his wife. "God has graciously provided work for me here, and glad I am to be thus employed in His service. No work so sweet, so delightful, as His. Just as I had written the above, Sir G. Grey's son called upon me, and took me to

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visit some poor people. I was glad again to have the opportunity of seeing the poor members of that body, of which Christ is the head. This evening Mr. Dusautoy has got the penny-subscribers to the Missionary Association to meet together, and I am to endeavour to animate and encourage them in their work. You see how I am needing your prayers every hour of the day. God has, I am persuaded, graciously heard yours, and the prayers of other friends; every step of my way seems ordered in mercy and love. May I be kept humble, watching, believing, and thankful."

Finding it possible he might be detained some time, he sent for Mrs. Bickersteth, who spent a week with him at Portsmouth. On the 24th of January he finally set sail for Africa. The following journal-letter was written chiefly on board ship, to be sent home the first opportunity that offered. He was not able, however, to despatch it till he reached Goree, so that his friends at home received no tidings of him for four months.

At Sea, off Lisbon, February 10th, 1816.

MY BELOVED WIFE,

. . . . God has been very gracious to us, and though we have been tried, we have been protected and helped on hitherto.

The three first days we had a fair wind, which carried us down the English channel, till we came off Ushant, in France. The wind then became contrary, and has, with some variations, continued against us till this morning, when it is fair again. Sunday, Jan. 28th, we could not have public worship, on account of the state of the sea. This was somewhat trying to me, (as I could not but think, if there had been a will, there might have been a way, and I remembered the Portsmouth Sundays,) yet I felt I might still enjoy the communion of saints with Christian congregations wor-

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shipping in England, and with my beloved S—. We were passing over the Bay of Biscay, off which we were detained the whole of the following week by contrary winds. My sea-sickness lasted about twelve days, but gradually became more tolerable, till it left me, and a good part of the time I was able to read, by lying down on my bed.

On Sunday, February 4th, I could not help earnestly praying that we might have such weather, as would enable us to have public worship. God heard me, and we had the finest day we have had yet. I preached from James iv. 14. We cannot have service twice, as there is much difficulty in getting all the crew together. In the evening we had a heavy gale of wind, but nothing to what we had on Tuesday morning, February 6th.*

Yesterday (Friday 9th.), the wind continued very boisterous, and a wave washed directly into our cabin, but did us no harm.

I mention these things, that your faith in God may be increased, and that you may join me in thanking Him for all His benefits.

My companions are accommodating and obliging, but do not enter into my views and feelings. I have enjoyed much of the presence of that God and Saviour whom I desire to serve, and, though often hindered by my sinfulness and weakness, yet I have been able

* This gale is thus described in his journal:—"About two o'clock this morning we were awakened by a storm. The wind blew tremendously, and quite against us. With some difficulty the sails were taken in. All was in a bustle. The sea rushed in torrents over the deck, and through a port-hole which the waves had forced open. The boat at the stern was swept away. I had been considering the day before, that passage, 'Whosoever believeth on Him shall never perish,' &c., and I found this text peculiarly refreshing to my mind. I felt, whatever was the result, that I could fully repose in that promise. The wind somewhat abated as the day advanced, but even now the sea runs very high. It is an awfully magnificent sight. At one time the ship is rising to a great height in the air, and then sinking down an immense declivity into the deep. The scene is most accurately described Psalm cvii. 23—27. From the deck we can see nothing but the sky, and these mountainous waves to a short distance round the ship. The howling wind scudding over them whitens their tops, and gives the whole a dreary appearance. It affords me a new view of the power of that mighty Saviour, who said, 'Peace, be still; and there was a great calm;' who walked on the top of the tumultuous sea.

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in prayer to Him, to know and to feel that my fellowship is with Him, and His Son Jesus Christ.

My friends in Norwich and Norfolk, in London, at Liverpool, at Acton, and elsewhere, have not been forgotten; and above all, my dearest S—— has been daily brought before the throne of grace. O may your soul abundantly prosper, and should it, (as I trust it will,) please our heavenly Father again to unite us, and give us to each other afresh; may it be to give up ourselves wholly to Him, in a far different and higher way than ever we have yet done.

I have been able to read, on the whole, a good deal, but have not been able to write sermons. I hope to do this before I get to Goree or Sierra Leone, for I do not expect to have much time to spare from the immediate objects of my mission. I have sometimes a depressing sense of my own incompetency for what is before me, but find some rest in the tried sufficiency of Christ.

I hope I may be able to send this from Madeira, or at farthest from Goree. I did not think it fair, as I had asked you to have letters ready, not to follow my own rules.

At sea, off Africa, about 100 *miles from Madeira.*
February 12*th*, 1816.

Through God's mercy we have had a brisk gale, entirely in our favour since I wrote my last, so that we have advanced considerably in our course. The only thing I regret in it, was, that the sea was too high to admit of the crew being called together for public worship, which I felt a great disappointment, as it is almost my only means of doing good. The sea is still very high, and frequently washes over the sides of the ship and the deck. The weather is sensibly warmer, I should think as warm as it is in June in England. I was interested in the consideration, that I am nearly in the same latitude as Judea,—as that land in which my Saviour lived and died. I have full employment for my time in reading &c. I have written one sermon, and hope now to do more soon; but whilst the wind blows hard, the ship rolls, and neither composition nor

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reading are altogether comfortable or easy, from not having a cabin to myself. I sometimes feel Psalm cxx. 5. Certainly to be in a small room, thirteen feet square, in which five men eat, drink, wash, smoke, and sleep, with a stove which frequently sends the smoke inwards, instead of carrying it upwards, the sea roaring without, and sometimes dashing in at the door, and the rain falling, so that you cannot be on deck, and to be sea-sick as I was for many days, might seem to be distasteful enough; it was not indeed worse than I expected, for I had counted the cost; but, however distasteful to the flesh, the presence and love of the Saviour, and walking in His ways, makes all easy, and changes the cabin into the palace of the King of kings. Yes, my love, I have found myself as happy as I could be without you, in this ship. Sometimes I have been fearful lest you should be too anxious about me; but be not so, nor about any earthly thing; our time, at the longest, must be but short; we shall both of us soon exchange the cabin of this world for our purchased inheritance beyond the skies, and be with our Saviour and each other for ever; yet it is perfectly right to wish and pray for the continuance of earthly blessings, in submission to the will of our heavenly Father.

We can better calculate now when we shall be at Sierra Leone. It will most probably be the end of this month, or very early in the next. You may be assured I shall lose no time, as far as is consistent with my health, in getting my work done. I shall go first to Bashia, on the Rio Pongas, and Isles de Loss, and then finish what is to be done in Sierra Leone. Most probably, if God prosper me, this may be so as to enable me to leave in May. I am informed the passage home is much longer than that out, as we have to beat up against the trade-winds; so that, if all go well, it will still probably be the end of August before you see me. But repose all calmly and entirely with God; you are encouraged to do so by His promises and by past experience, and He will reward you. I trust you will do this, as I shall otherwise be distressed at the idea of your being uneasy.

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Within a day's sail of Senegal, Feb. 20, 1816.

God has still favoured us with fair wind, and we have advanced rapidly in our voyage. The weather is delightful, and our cabin is much more comfortable. The stove is banished, and we enjoy all the comfort of summer, without its oppressive heat. I read prayers and preached on Sunday, from John iii. 16. I should have been glad to have done this twice, but it was declined. I am somewhat despondíng about any good having been done by me to this ship's crew, in the fear that I have not been faithful; perhaps this check was needful for me, after the encouraging reception I had at Portsmouth.

It was thought we had overshot Madeira; but, when we came to Teneriffe, we found we had passed it about thirty miles to the eastward. We had a very fine view of the huge mountain at Teneriffe. There were no clouds upon it, so that we saw it distinctly. It reminded me of the mountains about the lakes, and thus of all I had left behind.

I do hope you will not be anxious. It was my greatest distress in missing Madeira, that I could not send my letter to you from there as I wished, and therefore I feared lest the inevitably long delay in hearing should make you uneasy; and it is my daily prayer, often with tears, that God will comfort you and build you up, and bless this separation to us both. Wherever we are, my love, we are on the very verge of eternity, but let it be our whole comfort—that, "To us to live is Christ, and to die is gain." What a mass of iniquity do we daily commit! I am sure my whole life often appears one continual black line of sins!—one continual display of that wisdom which is earthly, sensual, devilish! and it is most manifest to me that my only hope for every thing must be in that precious Saviour, whom I desire to preach, and in the mercy of that God whom I wish to serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son.

I have written two more sermons, and hope to prepare some more; but I cannot exactly tell the state of Goree and Sierra Leone, and therefore do not know what will be needful for them.

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Goree, February 23, 1816.

Through God's mercy I arrived here in safety yesterday morning, and am happy to hear that a ship will soon sail for England.

I find Mr. Hughes (the Society's schoolmaster at Goree) very usefully employed, and bearing an excellent character. He has a school of above eighty children, most of them mulattoes. The little island of Goree,—perhaps half a mile long, and a quarter of a mile broad,—is supposed to contain above 5000 inhabitants, chiefly blacks, speaking the Jaloof language, and yet Hughes knows of none whom he can consider as truly born of God. What a distressing consideration! The scene is new, and very extraordinary to a stranger; the black inhabitants go about in a most indecorous state, some with hardly any dress, and others with a cloth round their waist and shoulder. They are lying about indolently before their circular straw huts.

Do not be distressed by any tidings from Africa. Some more of our missionaries are dead, but the season is now, I am informed, very healthy. Yes, my beloved wife, now your faith is tried, show that it is genuine, Read Acts xii. and take comfort from the consideration, that many have promised us their prayers. I do not find the heat at Goree uncomfortable. My health is excellent; yet should it be the will of God to take me to Himself, I still trust in Him. Lay yourself out for Him, rise above the world and the creature, and satisfy yourself in His infinite fulness; you will never be a loser by parting with your husband for your Saviour. He will not suffer by the loss even of life in his Master's service. The Lord shed his blessing upon you, and all my relations, friends, and connections, and the Church of God, for Christ's sake.

Your ever-affectionate Husband,

E. BICKERSTETH.

Mr. Bickersteth preached twice at Goree on the Sabbath, and administered the sacrament privately to Mr. and Mrs. Hughes: he was also called upon to bury Dr.

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Lardner, the chief medical man of the place. This service, and the tidings received from Africa of the decease of the Missionaries, deeply impressed his own mind: he felt that he was going into a land of death; that it was not only possible, but probable, he might never return. "The next funeral," he writes in his Journal, "may be my own:" and then follows a solemn act of self-examination, as to whether his soul was prepared to appear in the immediate presence of God. On the 1st of March he set sail again for Sierra Leone. The near prospect of important duties drew his soul out in prayer: he writes thus in his Journal:—

"*March* 3. And now I come to the great work for which I was sent. Where can I look for wisdom but to thee, O Lord? These things I want of thee,—

"1st. To win Christ and be found in Him.

"2nd. To deny myself, and follow Him, my Saviour.

"3rd. To have wisdom, judgment, and discretion suited to my need.

"4th. To have firmness and integrity to act according to my judgment.

"5th. To act in the spirit of humility and love.

"6th. To be ready for death, if it please Thee to call me to it."

The probability of being cut off by sudden fever, naturally led Mr. Bickersteth's thoughts much to those he had left at home; and as in such a case he might not have time to write to his beloved partner, he prepared a letter which was to be given to her in the event of his death. This letter he himself placed in her hands on his return, with feelings of no common gratitude to the God who had preserved him through so many dangers.

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It was laid by, as a precious memento of thoughtful affection; and more than thirty years afterwards, when the hour of separation indeed arrived, was as a voice of consolation from that world of bliss, where he is now entered. An extract from it may cheer other Christian mourners.

"Grieve not for me, my love. I believe and am persuaded, that though I am a poor, wretched, polluted sinner in myself,—yea, as Bradford said, a very painted hypocrite,—yet, through the grace of Christ, I am an heir of eternal life, and have now the blessed alternative before me, of serving my Saviour in the ministry, or being with Him in glory. But 'to depart and be with Christ is far better.' You love me most tenderly; grieve not, then, in my happiness. I feel for you; but I know, my dearest love, after a little time you will follow me, and we shall together serve our Saviour, free from those sins which have hitherto defiled our service. Why then should we grieve? Our separation is only a little longer than we calculated upon: think of me as now singing the song 'Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, be glory and dominion for ever.' Think of me as now satisfied in awaking after the Divine likeness. Think only that our next meeting will be free from earthly alloy, anxiety, and care. Thus think, and all will be well.

"Nor, because of my death, think that it was rash or foolish in me thus to adventure my life. I am satisfied it was my highest wisdom. I am satisfied, should I die, I shall have been thus preserved from many temptations and snares into which I might have fallen, to the great injury of my own soul, and the scandal of the Church: or, in some other way, that Saviour whom I serve, and

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who has thus led me, will make this loss of my life for Him, a great and a real gain to me, and not to me only, but to you also and His church.

"Thus your soul will be drawn nearer to Him, and you will be more weaned from the world. I know that the loss of a Christian husband, however low his graces may be, must be serious to a Christian wife. But it will lead you to your Saviour, as your better—far better husband: do not think you are left alone then; He will guide you, direct you, and comfort you. . . .

"My advice to you is, to seek to be more and more renewed after the Divine image, and, for this, to meditate much upon the love of Christ to the soul, and the necessity, excellency, and bliss of being conformed to Him. Beware of worldly anxiety and carefulness. He hath said—and trust His saying—'I will never leave you nor forsake you.' Lay yourself out in every way for Him, redeeming the time. Be as much among the poor, and in promoting schools, as your health will allow. . . .

"Farewell, my beloved wife! We parted at Portsmouth in tears, and with heavy hearts. We shall meet again, to be with Him who will wipe away all tears from our eyes; and with gladness of heart be at His right hand, where are pleasures for evermore. To him I now commend you."

On March 7th Mr. Bickersteth arrived in Sierra Leone. He did not remain more than a week in the colony, as it was deemed important to visit the Rio Pongas settlements before the rains set in. During this week he was introduced to Governor McCarthy, from whom he received every kind attention, and with whom he had much

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important conversation as to the future plans of the Society. He was disposed to concur in the justice of the Governor's representations, as to the importance of directing the main efforts of the Society to the recaptured negroes in the colony. "It appears," he wrote in his journal, "very important to mark the indications of a providential leading. Among these I consider the protection of an established government, the facility and safety of intercourse with the people, the economy attending a mission, and the number that may easily be gathered together. In the absence of supernatural inspiration, such circumstances may be considered as the call, 'Come over and help us;' and all these things speak strongly in favour of our exertions in the colony."

The Mission, however, to the Rio Pongas, which had been commenced in faith and prayer, was not, on account of present discouragements, to be given up lightly, or before the providence of God made it very clear that it was inexpedient to persevere in it. Mr. Bickersteth prepared to inspect these settlements. He engaged a schooner to take him along the coast. Mr. Nylander, one of the most valuable of the Society's Missionaries, accompanied him on the voyage, both for the sake of his own health, and to afford Mr. Bickersteth the benefit of his experience. They first visited the Gambier settlement at Rapparoo. Here they were exposed to some difficulty in landing. The Journal thus describes their providential escape.

"*March* 16, 1816. *Saturday.* It was near eleven o'clock at night when we arrived. We expected to reach the Isles de Loss this morning; but it was late in the afternoon, and the vessel could not be brought, on account of the tide, nearer to the Gambier Settlement than two or

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three miles. The captain assuring us that there was no danger in going on shore in the yawl, as the men were well acquainted with the coast, and being anxious ourselves to spend a quiet Sunday, we set off as it was getting dusk. We had left the ship scarcely a quarter of an hour, before it grew quite dark: the men lost all idea of the coast to which we were to steer, and neither land nor ship was to be seen. The yawl leaked considerably, and we could not find anything to bale out the water. We were thus in the wide ocean, in a dark night, and ignorant whither we were going. Providentially it had occurred to me that it would be useful to have a lantern, as it would be dark when we got on shore. I had also in my pocket a compass, of which we soon found the value. We were now truly glad to possess these things, and found by them that we had been going into the open sea. We changed our course immediately, and, after some little time, found a calabash to bale out the water. Our minds were kept in a calm reliance on God. The candle soon burning out, we had a difficulty in lighting another. At length, after rowing some time, we got near to land; but it was several miles from the place to which we were bound, and the men had a considerable distance to row along shore. Instead of getting in at 7 o'clock, we did not reach the place before 11. Mr. and Mrs. Klein were retired to rest, but we soon called them up, and they were truly glad to be so disturbed. We sat some time in conversation with them; and, having brought our beds with us in the yawl, we went to rest, thankful for all God's mercies to us. We slept in the school-room, which is something like an English barn; but the toil and dangers of the day made us glad and thankful in our present comforts and safety."

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Here Mr. Bickersteth preached to the natives, one of the elder children named Juliet, a girl of much promise, who knew both English and Soosoo, acting as interpreter. He had more than one interview with Mongè Demba, the headman or chief of the neighbourhood, explaining to him the motives which brought the Missionaries from England. Mongè Demba promised to be their friend, saying, "If any man came to trouble white man under his protection, it would be like beating his wife before his face." On parting from him, Mr. Bickersteth strove to illustrate the state of himself and his countrymen by the parable of men who have lost their ship at sea, and are in danger of drowning. "We white men," he told him, "stood on firm ground on the shore; and loving black men, and seeing them in such danger, we could not but send them boats; in other words, we sent teachers, to save them from being condemned at the last day." Mr. B. was much pleased with three or four of the elder girls at the settlement, whom he considered fit subjects for baptism. He left them with regret, the poor children sobbing as they parted from him.

On the 22nd of March they set off again for the Rio Pongas, paying a short visit, on the way, to the Isles de Loss, which did not prove an eligible station for a Missionary. Their daily prayers on deck excited much astonishment in their black captain and crew. "They see us at our morning and evening worship together on deck, at which Mr. Nylander and three of the Society's boys, who accompany us, attend. We explain what we read. Mr. Nylander talked with the captain this evening, and told him why we did so—to thank God in heaven for taking care of us, and to ask Him still to do so.

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The captain said—"O yes, it is very right; but never saw white men do dis fashion before."

They spent one Sunday on board their little schooner, and preached twice to their small native congregation, the black captain saying he was very glad to hear such things. In advancing up the Pongas river, Mr. Bickersteth was struck with observing the depopulating effects of the slave-trade. The river, with its low banks, lined with mangrove-trees, reminded him of some parts of the Thames; but there were no towns with churches for the worship of God, no cheerful and hospitable mansions, no birds refreshing him with their songs, but a death-like silence. The slave-trade seemed to have depopulated as well as demoralized Africa. At length they caught sight of the Bashia settlement. Many of Mr. Bickersteth's friends will remember the delight with which he used, at Missionary meetings, to describe the greeting he met with, from the large school of black children assembled here. The state of the school much gratified him. "No English school that I am acquainted with," he wrote, "would have answered the questions so seriously and so feelingly. Surely the labour of God's servants has not been in vain. Surely God's Spirit has striven, and is yet striving, with the hearts of these children. I already feel a great love for them." He thought that some of the elder children might now with advantage be admitted to the Lord's Supper. Nine boys and four girls, above the age of fifteen, were selected to receive instruction from him. He went through with them that part of the Catechism which refers to this subject. Having explained the ordinance, he told them they should each do what seemed right to their own minds. It was a privilege to attend, and a

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command, and they were then come to years when he thought it right to bring it before them. He then prayed with them. He bestowed much time and care in preparing these dear children for that sacred feast, in which his own soul so much delighted, and on Easter Sunday he admitted six of them to the Supper of the Lord. These were the first-fruits of the Society's labours among the heathen.

Mr. Bickersteth also visited the settlement at Canoffee, three miles higher up the river. The missionary buildings at Bashia had been more than once destroyed by fire; there was reason to think it had been intentionally kindled, and as there was no special reason for keeping up both settlements, he determined that it would be better to give up Bashia and remove the children to Canoffee. Mongé Fernandez was the most powerful head-man in that part of the Susoo country; he had always taken an interest in the mission; it was therefore thought desirable to consult him, before making final arrangements for the settlement. For this purpose Mr. Bickersteth undertook a journey up the country to Bfaima, where he resided. He went chiefly by water. After rowing three hours, they came to Domingues, where there were a few houses, and where the children ran away terrified from the sight of the white man. From thence the Grumettas, or native servants, rowed them to Gandia; it was a hard and long pull. At seven o'clock their fresh water was exhausted. "We pull away, or we die now, no water live here," said the poor men; and they rowed on till eleven at night. The head-man was absent, but some natives procured them an empty hut. "I could not," says Mr. Bickersteth, "but be somewhat amused by the novelty of the situation. In the midst of a heathen town, and in

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a small mud hut, hung round with gregrees, we laid ourselves down round the fire; some on mats, and some on the mud floor. My bag was my pillow. I had where to lay my head: the Saviour, in his own world, had not. We felt safe in the protection of God." The following morning they rowed to Hamoa, which they reached at ten o'clock. The journal continues thus:

"There is a devil's house at the entrance, and another at the end of the town. Every thing appears strange around us. The children and people running about half naked—the speaking through an interpreter—the sitting on the country stools, six inches high, under a thatched piazza—the salutation '*mama*,' shaking of hands, and the return '*ba*'—the people collecting together to gaze at us—and the discord of a foreign language—all is strange! There were plenty of parrots among the trees at the side of the river. The chattering of the monkeys was a new sound to me. The house in which we rested was hung round with an abundance of gregrees, and among others a Portuguese gregree, or crucifix. Surely Papists do not know how nearly they approach to African savages, in their confidence in relics, and such lying vanities. I talked to the head-man about this crucifix, telling him Christ was the only Saviour. I was amused by the remark of a Grumetta. When we asked him how far it was to Kamya, he said in reply, 'We must soon all be canoes,'—meaning that each must soon exert himself in walking the rest of the way. We set off from Kamya at two o'clock. There are no carriage-roads here, but paths in which only a single person can walk. I was interested by the novelty of an African walk. Sometimes the thick grass rose considerably above our heads, and prevented

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us from seeing any thing, except the man immediately before. In many parts it resembled an English shrubbery of evergreens."

At Braima he was received with much kindness by Mr. Fernandez, who encouraged him as to the mission, and concurred in the propriety of assembling a Palaver Meeting (the name given on the coast to a meeting for discussion) at which he should bring before the head-men the plan of visiting the native towns, and preaching the Gospel to the inhabitants. Mr. Bickersteth returned to the settlement at Bashia on foot. "The mercies of God," he wrote, "in the whole of this short excursion, call for my warmest gratitude. I had many reasons to fear the effect of the walk in such a climate; but I have been much less fatigued than I expected."

Mr. Fernandez showed his good will by attending the Palaver Meeting, which was held at Lissa. There were about a hundred and fifty black men present, some under the piazzas of the different houses, some on mats near Mongé Backe, the king to whom Lissa belonged. Any one was at liberty to attend the meeting, and speak at it. One arose and spoke in Susoo at some length, to tell Mr. Bickersteth they were ready to hear what he had to say. He then addressed them, telling them why good white men had sent the missionaries, and setting before them some of the plain principles, precepts, and hopes of the Bible. He explained to them that it was not the head-men of England or Sierra Leone who sent the missionaries, as some of them supposed, but good men in England, who feared God, and wished to do them good. He told them what he now wanted, was to know whether they could have more land at Canoffee for the settlement, and

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he wanted the missionaries also to have full liberty, without expense, to come into their towns, and teach them the same things they taught their children. One got up and made a long reply, the purport of which was, that the missionaries professed to do good to the country, and yet they gave them no guns nor powder to help them against their enemies the Foulahs, and they did not make trade, nor do good to the country. To this, Mr. Bickersteth replied; similar accusations were made and answered. At length Mongé Backe said, they might have more land, if they wanted it, and no objection was made to preaching in the towns. The meeting lasted four hours, and but for the energy displayed by Mr. Fernandez, might have lasted as many days. "I see," said Mr. Bickersteth, "a Palaver Meeting is not a suitable occasion for preaching the Gospel."

The object for which he convened this African assembly, to facilitate preaching the Gospel to the adults, was one much on his mind. He determined to set the example himself, and preach through an interpreter. The man made egregious mistakes: a *change* of mind he called—*chaining* the mind; two *classes* of men, two *glasses; for ever*, he could not understand, and for *written in a book*, he said, *written with the foot*. This made some confusion, "But," added Mr. Bickersteth, "the man will improve, and it appears better to do the thing imperfectly than not at all. I have already seen the good effects of this practice. A Susoo man, who came from a neighbouring town, told me through Mr. Fernandez, 'Your words live in my heart. You told us, God came from heaven into white man's country, and now He would come to us. Stephen,' meaning the interpreter, 'made us know it.'

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Mr. Bickersteth also took opportunities of talking with individuals about the way of salvation.

"A Mandingo man came from a neighbouring town with many gregrees on his arm and beads in his hand. I asked him what they were good for. He said, 'they helped him as to God.' I then talked with him at some length on the subject, and shewed him the vanity of his gregrees, when he should come before God in judgment; and set before him the way of salvation through Christ. At last he said, 'Gregree fool palaver,' that is, would not help him; but he insisted on the virtue of his beads. I asked him, 'Why not throw away your beads also?' He said, 'No! people take me for a prayman, and I get easily through the country.' After further conversation with him, he said, 'You say very true—a good palaver;' but he went away, keeping his gregrees and his beads. I said to him on parting, 'These things not only do no good, but they do harm. God is angry with those who wear and trust in such things. Trust in Jesus Christ, God's own Son. No way but that, to save black man or white man. I have thought of all ways; that is the only good way.'"

Dwelling now in the midst of a heathen land, his spirit was stirred within him by the sight of their superstitions.

"I have just been walking in a Susoo Town with Mr. Nyländer. Before one house was a long stick stuck up, with a piece of string and paper at the end. We inquired what that was good for. The owner said, 'It stood between him and God!' We asked him to let us take it away, assuring him that it was of no use; but he was not willing—nor will he be, till he knows and believes in the

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true Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ, who does indeed stand between God and the sinner."

"By the water-side was a Devil's house, or place erected for the evil spirit, to take care of the town. It was a little straw hut, with a jug, in which they occasionally put palm wine, and a broken plate—a miserable temple. If, such as the temple, such are the people, surely those in this place are sunk indeed." . . .

"Near Bashia, in a creek of the river, is a rock to which the natives offer sacrifices: esteeming it the residence of a spirit, and asserting that the rock sometimes moves. They had a superstitious notion, that it would be death to any one to put his foot on this rock. I determined to undeceive them, and mounted the dreaded rock, but on my return, they had their subterfuge ready. 'Gregree no hurt white man!' Some of the boys were much alarmed at my supposed rashness, and the people said, 'He die before he go home.'"

On the 16th of April, Mr. Bickersteth, having finished his work at the settlement, set sail to return to Sierra Leone, which he reached on the 20th of that month.

While at Sierra Leone, his attention was much occupied with the Christian Institution at Leicester Mountain. Above three hundred African children were assembled there. Half their day was to be spent in school, and half in labour; many of them were training under different mechanics. Large buildings were being erected, and it was proposed to bring a considerable portion of land under cultivation; the object being, to train the children as useful members of society. They were to be maintained, partly by Government, partly by the benefactions of private individuals. A subscription of £5 per annum for

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six years, sufficed for the maintenance of one child, whose name might be chosen by his benefactor. Mr. Bickersteth had brought with him a long list of names that were to be given to the children. It was an interesting employment to fix the beloved names of Biddulph, Martyn, Milner, &c., on these African little ones. "I spoke," he wrote, "with several who were likely to understand me, telling them the character of those whose names they bore. Could we but give them the souls of these good men, what a blessing these children would be to Africa! The Lord can do this, and more than this. Indeed, I hope some Buchanan, Martyn, Biddulph, Milner, Simeon, Woodd, Corrie, Pratt, Richmond, and Noel, &c., &c., may arise from amongst them, to proclaim to their countrymen the glad tidings of salvation by Christ. Their black faces seemed gratified with the labels we put round their necks."

The rainy season had now commenced. Exposure to these violent tropical rains is often attended with risk to Europeans. Mr. Bickersteth was mercifully shielded from this danger, as well as from every other. He felt the languor and weakness occasioned by a hot climate, but had not a day's illness in Africa. He saw enough, however, of the trials to which his Missionary brethren were exposed, to enable him to sympathize more deeply with them.

"The roofs of the houses here are a very inadequate protection against the weather. Missionaries must be prepared to expect discomforts of this kind. To be left alone in a damp, leaky mud-hut—the floor mud, which softens with the least wet, the walls mud, no fire, nor fire-place, no Christian friends to cheer and comfort the mind, his

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body weakened probably by disease, and his soul troubled by seeing little or no fruit of his labours; no access to that kind of food to which he has been accustomed, and which would strengthen his body, no drink but water, no food but rice, and add to all these the peculiar temptations that surround him—the difficulty of maintaining in every thought of the heart, a sacred obedience to that command,—"*Keep thyself pure,*" while all about him is impure—in such a situation, the Missionary, if the love of Christ does not glow warmly in his heart, and the faith and patience of a Christian are not in vigorous exercise, must be of all men most miserable."

From Sierra Leone Mr. Bickersteth crossed the river to visit the Yongroo Pomah settlement on the Bullom shore. He was delayed from ten o'clock till three, waiting for Kroomen to row him over.

"I have sometimes," he wrote, "endeavoured to ascertain the root of the impatience which rises on such occasions. There is in it too much of this feeling; I am such a great man, able to do so much, and to make so much of my time, that the loss of it in this way is unsupportable. But it pleases God to show us, by these delays, that He is the great Master, and that we are nothing but His instruments; that there is a time to wait upon Him, and acknowledge our insignificance, as well as a time to work. Beside, His ways are always best, and it is good only when our own thoughts and ways are brought into subjection to Him."

At Yongroo, he witnessed similar scenes of degrading heathenism, and his own time was occupied in much the same manner, examining the school children, and visiting the native villages. On the 2nd of May, he was brought

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back to Sierra Leone, by the tidings that a vessel, the 'Echo' had arrived, bringing the new school-masters and mistresses. To assign them the posts where they were most likely to be useful, was a matter of much anxiety. "I feel more and more," he wrote, "how great and responsible a Mission is committed to me, and the disposal of the school-masters and their wives, causes many an anxious thought. Sometimes I dread, lest I should mar, rather than help, my Saviour's cause here. My only hope is in Him, who has promised to give help to them that ask." One of the school-masters who came over at this time, was Mr. Johnson, who was afterwards ordained, and was so eminently blessed at Regent's Town. Mr. Bickersteth quickly perceived of what spirit he was. "I am much pleased," he wrote, "with what I have seen in Mr. Johnson, there seems a deadness to the world, and a devotion of heart to the cause, which are likely to make him a blessing where God's providence shall place him."

May 4th, he returned to Yongroo, to keep his engagement with the headmen, who had promised to join him at a Palaver meeting. The proceedings were much the same as at Lissa, only fewer objections were made, and all went all well till near the close.

"So far," he writes, "this would have been a very satisfactory meeting, but one unlucky fellow put it into their heads to ask for rum, and another entertaining the same wish, they asked us for some. We told them, "Oh no, we can never do that, rum spoils the head—we want to teach you good things." They said, "we want something to pay us for the trouble of coming to hear all this." We said, "We should do bad to give you rum, that no good at all, we can never do that." Brother Nyländer said, "You make

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me ashamed of my Bullom people, before white man, my stranger." They then seemed sorry that they had asked for rum: but every interview shows the carnal mind in full vigour among Bulloms as well as Susoos. But we will, God helping us, teach them higher and better things."

Sunday, May 5, was spent at Yongroo, "a happy, though a busy Sunday." He preached twice, and in the morning administered the sacrament to the little party with him. They were but five in number; but he says, "We found it good thus to meet four or five, and remember our crucified Lord. My heart was much broken and softened under my sinfulness and His love, and the difficulties in every respect attending this Mission." In the afternoon he baptised the two little children of the Missionary; and the black children seeming interested, he was glad of the opportunity of talking to them about the ordinance.

May 7, was the day of the Anniversary Meeting of the Society in London. Mr. Bickersteth did not forget it in the distant heathen settlement of Yongroo.

"*Yongroo Pomah, May* 7, 1816. I found my mind very distracted at first in my private prayer, but by persevering I found my heart enabled to pray with comfort for the work of Missions generally in Africa, for each individual in particular, and for the presence of God in the meeting of the Society at home.

"I explained Isa. lii. to the children, and told them how their kind friends would meet this day in England for them. We sang the 72nd Psalm, and prayed for God's blessing on the meeting in London."

A portrait of Mrs. Bickersteth, which he carried about

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with him, excited great astonishment. At the Rio Pongas settlement, when he showed it to them, they said, "She lives there—he can say, It is my wife—she no trouble him. White man clever—it is as good as if he had her with him." A conclusion to which he did not agree. At Yongroo he made use of the wonder which it excited to induce some of the women to come and hear the Missionaries. "'You see white people know a great deal which black people do not; but there are better things than these which they know about God, and the way to heaven when we die. Mr. Nyländer preaches these things on Sunday; will you come and hear him?' They said they did not know English. I told them he would speak in Bullom. They then asked, apparently with some conscious shame, 'Will you pay us for the trouble of coming?' I replied, 'Oh no, it is for your own good that we take such pains to teach you; come and hear.' They then said they would come next Sunday; and asked the number of days to Sunday, which we told them."

One evening, when at Sierra Leone, Mr. Bickersteth entered into conversation with Richard Naloe, a pious negro in the establishment on Leicester Mountain.

"I said, 'Richard, great Bookman in England say it is of no use to send Mr. Wenzel and Mr. Butscher to teach you black people. What say *you?*' He replied, 'No, massa, no! Me live in the country, and no saby God (knew nothing of God); me go to Rio Pongas—me live a year with Mr. Wenzel—me saby little of God.' I continued, 'You do think it then of some use to send white people to teach black men.' He answered, 'Yes, massa! me walk on here in the dark, (pointing to the steps of the piazza); me have no candle—me fall—me break my arm

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or break my leg: but white man put candle in my hand —me see—me no fall—me walk down steps—me get home safe! Me not know much, but know little about God. Mr. Butscher speaks, and me glad to know more.'"

Mr. Bickersteth preached several times at Sierra Leone to full congregations. On May 12, he preached on the subject of the Bible Society, from Matt. xxii. 29. The Governor, who was anxious for the establishment of a Bible Association in Sierra Leone, had sent round to request that other places of worship might be closed at that hour; the attendance was therefore large. On the Thursday a meeting, at which Governor McCarthy took the chair, was held to form the Association. "It was a very interesting meeting," wrote Mr. Bickersteth, "and lasted about two hours. May it be the presage of better times for Africa! It is a great thing to see the chief men in a colony thus nobly coming forward, to plead for the Bible and the Bible Society. God be thanked for all."

This African Bible Society has had many fluctuations. At one time, when the Mission was low, it seemed almost extinct; but it has since been revived, and the very year when it pleased God to take his faithful servant to himself, it was the means of circulating an unusual number of Bibles. Thus, even after his removal, have the trees which he planted been bearing fruit to the glory of his Divine Master.

Mr. Bickersteth's work in Africa was now almost completed. The prayer he had offered on approaching its coast had been graciously fulfilled. A large measure of wisdom and judgment, firmness and integrity, humility and love, had been poured upon him. The instructions given him had been carefully fulfilled. He had bestowed

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particular attention on the examination of the children in the schools; he had made minute inquiries with regard to every thing affecting the welfare of the Mission and its future conduct, not neglecting even the small details of household economy, which might enable the Committee to form a wise judgment as to the wants of their Missionaries in an African climate. He had laboured to remove impediments in the way of preaching the Gospel to the heathen, and had himself set the example of so doing. He had diligently exercised his ministry in the colony; and in the more delicate and painful task of settling differences amongst his brethren, had striven with patience and gentleness to examine causes of dissension, to sift false reports, to remove hasty impressions, to restore those who had fallen, and to place each where his talents would be most useful, and where he would be least exposed to temptation. His own soul had often been wearied and perplexed with the difficulties around him; and often had he been driven by them to take refuge in prayer. He had also sought, in every step, to profit by the advice and experience of his brethren. When at the Rio Pongas settlements, he had appointed a general meeting to be held at Sierra Leone in May, at which all the Missionaries were to attend; and he had left behind him a list of questions, on which he wished each party to give his opinion, before he drew out the final instructions he intended to leave with them. Almost every one he found had some valuable suggestions to offer. The meetings were held on the 18th, 20th, and 21st of May. The instructions he then delivered, and the report he gave in to the Committee of the parent Society on his return, may be found in its 16th Annual Report. They

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show how comprehensive a view he had taken of the whole Mission. A few extracts from his Instructions will be given here, as illustrating the spirit in which he acted amidst the Missionaries in Africa.

DEAR BRETHREN,

I feel some difficulty in addressing those, who, having been longer than myself in the ministry, or being of greater age and experience, are in many respects so much better able to teach and admonish me than I am them. Yet, as having been entrusted with my most important and responsible mission, by those excellent men in England, whom we may justly call Fathers in Christ, and being in possession of their sentiments, and speaking in their name, I venture to request your attention to such things as it appears requisite to bring forward.

1. In noticing what is past, I feel that we ought all to be grateful to God, that you have been enabled, amidst so many discouragements, so many difficulties, and so many deaths, to persevere in seeking the salvation of perishing Africans. The state of many children in the different schools, which I have seen and examined, gives me great reason to hope that your labours have not been wholly in vain. You have indeed borne the burden and heat of the day, and sown much precious seed, and, though little of the fruit may yet appear, be not discouraged. We must not despise the day of small things. The grain of mustard-seed will yet, in God's good time, become a great tree. We, at home, have often perhaps taken too enlarged and favourable a view of what has been doing; but I believe some of you have been disposed at times to make too desponding an estimate of your success. I am glad also to have found, as I am willing to hope, in you all, a sincere desire to promote the salvation of the benighted people among whom you labour. Cherish this desire by much and continual prayer, that it may never grow weak or cold. Familiarity with the painful scenes of ignorance, superstition, and lust, which pass before your eyes, has a

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great tendency to weaken the conviction of the perishing condition of these poor heathens. Your zeal for their salvation can only be kept alive by continual communion with God. Let me also thank you, one and all, for the Christian kindness and attention which I have received from you. Though hitherto a stranger to you all, I have met with the reception of a brother.

But, while I feel pleasure in praising you in these things, there are others which I cannot, as a faithful steward of the work entrusted to me, pass over without animadversion. And first, I feel obliged to notice that disunion, which our great Enemy has excited among you. Be assured this is a most serious obstacle to the success of that mission which you have at heart. My friends, ye are brethren,—all engaged in one great work of saving immortal souls from ruin! The success and welfare of one, is the success and welfare of all. And why, ah! why, are you weakening your strength, and losing the fruit of your labours, by thus giving place to the devil?

You will have seen, by this time, that even Christians have their weaknesses and infirmities,—that even missionaries, who profess to have left all for Christ, have their spiritual diseases. But how miserable would a hospital be, if each patient were to be so offended with his neighbour's disease, as to differ with him on account of it, instead of trying to alleviate it! My brethren, "bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.....

There is another point respecting what is past, to which, from its supreme importance, I feel obliged to call your particular attention, —the preaching of the Gospel to the Natives.

To you, my brethren, is committed that vast and arduous privilege, which St. Paul so much coveted, to preach the Gospel, not where Christ was named, lest he should build upon another man's foundation; and as the work is the more arduous, so will the assistance, honour, and reward, of the faithful Missionary be more abundant.

All that I have seen has tended to impress on my mind, more and more, the importance of personal religion. The character of the

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Missionary should be no common character. I have seen the necessity of maintaining those devout habits of intercourse with our heavenly Master, and His holy word, which will raise the mind, through the grace of the Divine Spirit, above the influence of the temptations around you, and preserve the life of God in a state of vigour in the soul. Habits of prayer, self-examination, and searching the Scriptures, as they are needful for every Christian, so are they of especial necessity to the Missionary, and above all, to Missionaries circumstanced as you are. I can speak from my own experience among you. I have already seen, and felt, that in such a climate, and with such scenes around you, you are loudly called to live near to God, and by the daily and patient study of the Scriptures, continually to bring Scripture principles so before you, that you cannot lose sight of them. Had all of you strictly cultivated these habits, it would have been impossible, I think, that several things which have distressed us could have occurred.

If your personal religion be low, your comfort and usefulness will suffer in proportion. It is the meek, devout, contrite, and loving spirit, which, feeling its own guilt and wretchedness, is daily relieved by contemplating the wounds and sufferings of the Saviour, and pouring out its desires before God, and which is thence filled with divine love, and pities others, and longs to impart its supports and comforts to them,—it is this spirit which God owns and blesses. May that spirit in its full influence be granted to you all; and if there be any of you who possessed this spirit in a greater measure, before you encountered the temptations and dangers of dwelling among the heathen, but have now lost your first love; may you remember from whence you are fallen, and repent, and do your first works. May you all indeed give yourselves afresh to your heavenly Master. Many eyes are upon us. The faithful and persevering labours of Missionaries, and their high, and holy, and heavenly character, are the glory and comfort of a Society like ours. Not all the great and good names by which we are supported,—not all the large sums which are raised,—not all the talent which is exerted in

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our behalf at home,—these are not our glory; but when our Missionaries, amidst multiplied difficulties, are united, meek, blameless, humble, full of labours of love, steadily persevering in faith and patience, and endeavouring to accomplish all the great objects for which they have been sent out,—whether they succeed or not, we will rejoice in them, and glory in their behalf. Ye are our joy, and crown of rejoicing.

That God may give you all grace, thus to live at all times, is the prayer of your affectionate brother in Christ,

E. BICKERSTETH.

Free Town, Sierra Leone,
May 20th, 1816.

Many pleasing testimonies were borne to the value of Mr. Bickersteth's labours in Africa. "For our respected visitor," wrote Mr. Renner, "I can say, that he was both zealous and judicious in fulfilling the important trust which the Society reposed in him. He was partial to none of us, but acted in a straight course, dealing out meat in due season; or, in other words, admonishing, reproving, or comforting, as every one's situation or circumstances might require. His days among us he spent in much labour and fatigue, and no doubt in much anxiety of mind, to forward the cause of the Society, and the welfare of its settlements, and to promote the glory of God and the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ." Governor Mc'Carthy, writing to Earl Bathurst, bore the following testimony to his exertions; "Mr. Bickersteth remained only a short period here, but I form the most sanguine expectations, that his meritorious zeal and exertions will prove highly conducive to the important objects which brought him to the Coast; and I refer, with pleasure, to that gentleman, for such more minute information as your

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Lordship may wish to obtain relating to this part of his Majesty's dominions."

In a letter to Mr. Bickersteth himself, dated February 5th, 1817, the Governor wrote:—"I am happy to say that every thing is at present going on very prosperously, and should you be inclined to sacrifice your comfort again in two or three years, and come to see the fruits of the trees, which, if you did not plant, you fostered and preserved from destruction, I have no doubt but you would be much and amply gratified."

The Lord was about speedily to reward the faith and patience of His servants, which had been so severely tried in the African Mission. The Society was, indeed, before long, obliged to relinquish both the Susoo and Bullom settlements, but in the Colony itself a great work was prepared for its Missionaries, and a large blessing was vouchsafed to them. Thousands of re-captured negroes were yearly brought in to Sierra Leone. These naked and degraded victims of slavery were transferred from the holds of slave-ships to various settlements within the colony. The Missionaries of the Society went with them, settled with them in their villages, and introduced among them schools, and the ordinances of religion, and strove to train them up in all the proprieties and charities of civilized and Christian communities. Within two years after Mr. Bickersteth's return, such large outpourings of the Spirit rested on the labours of some of the Missionaries, that the scenes in West Africa recalled the primitive days of Christianity. The Mission afterwards sustained almost overwhelming losses in the death of some of its most faithful labourers; but still the work has advanced, and in 1849 the Jubilee Volume of the Society tells of

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two thousand and six communicants, instead of the six whom Mr. Bickersteth first admitted to that holy rite, and the number of attendants at public worship is now estimated at more than ten thousand. Such has been the social and religious advancement of this colony, that few of the most favoured spots in great Britain can exhibit parochial statistics which are equally favourable. Nor is this all; the hopes which had been disappointed, amidst the Susoos and Bulloms, were to be realized in another direction. Sierra Leone had always been viewed with a deep interest as a base for Missionary operations amidst the heathen in the interior. The tribes speaking so many different languages, there brought under Christian instruction, would, it was hoped, furnish messengers to convey the gospel to their benighted countrymen. Twenty years after the relinquishment of the first Missions, fresh openings appeared. One of the most numerous tribes at Sierra Leone had been brought from a country not far from the Niger. Some of them accompanied the Niger expedition, and brought back the intelligence, that the desolating wars which had once raged in their country, and of which they had been themselves the miserable victims, had ceased, and that the way was open for their return to their long-lost home. The Christian Natives of that tribe in Sierra Leone were fired with patriotic enthusiasm at this intelligence; but they at once determined, that they would not return to the beloved scenes of their early days, unless they could carry back with them the Bible and the Missionary. One of themselves had already been ordained, by the Bishop of London, as a Native minister, the Rev. S. Crowther. He therefore, and several European teachers, are now settled in that land, in the

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principal town called Abbeakouta, containing from fifty thousand to seventy thousand inhabitants." Great success has attended their efforts, an infant church has been raised, which in 1849 already numbered fifty-two communicants, and has firmly stood the severe test of persecution.

Mr. Bickersteth was spared to see the blessing which rested on the scene of his early labors, and when he welcomed Samuel Crowther to his rectory at Watton, he saw the fulfilment of his wish, that among the children educated in the Society's schools, some might arise, having the spirit of those whose names they bore, who should proclaim to their countrymen the glad tidings of salvation by Christ.

His work being so far completed, Mr. Bickersteth sought an opportunity of returning home. He had determined to bring with him Simeon Wilhelm, a promising youth from the Bashia school, who greatly desired to accompany him to England.* The 'Echo,' the vessel which brought out the school-masters, was going to Barbadoes, and though it seemed a long round to take in returning, many circumstances induced him to consider it best to secure a passage in this vessel, in which he sailed on the 7th of June. He had on board the Echo, a truly Christian captain (Captain Lowe) and there were eighty men, including prisoners and soldiers, amongst whom he could exercise his ministry. The Journal is full of allusions to the comfort afforded him by the regular means of grace, and the willingness of the captain to promote all his efforts for

* This youth died in the faith, August 29, 1817. An interesting Memoir of him, published by Mr. Bickersteth, may be found in his Occasional Works, pp. 1—59.

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the good of the crew. He had regular family worship, morning and evening, at which all who were able attended :—on these occasions he went through a course of expositions on the gospel of John. He conducted Divine worship twice on Sunday, besides collecting the boys of the ship in the afternoon for religious instruction. The society and Christian conversation of his Captain were a great refreshment to his spirit. His own time was spent after the sickness had abated, in writing sermons and the report of his journey. He would, in after-life, when referring to his want of a University education, playfully say, that the African voyage was his college. The few extracts which follow, are from the Journal kept on ship-board.

"*Ship Echo, at Sea. Sunday, June 16th,* 1816. We have had a calm this day. The Lord knows how long it is good for us to be delayed on the wide Atlantic Ocean, and when it will be good for us to arrive at Barbadoes. I feel happy in being in a Father's hands.

"I preached this morning to a tolerably large and attentive congregation. I can truly say, I enjoyed the presence of God in the services of the Church. The simplicity, earnestness, and repetitions of our Liturgy came home to my wants.

"In the afternoon, I got all the boys together, eleven in number, read two chapters, and talked to them from Tacy's Notes on Prov. iv. 13. They are all blacks but three. I then prayed with them.

"In the evening I preached from Prov. iii. 16. I had afterwards some interesting and spiritual conversation with our excellent captain ; I do trust I shall find his company profitable to my own soul.

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"*Ship Echo, at sea, Monday, June* 17, 1816. We saw several flying fish starting from the sea at the bow of the ship. At first I thought they had been small birds, but after watching a little time, it was evident they were fish. They rose up for a minute and then darted in again.

"The sea is now as clear as crystal, of a deep blue or azure colour, something like the blue expanse above. It is quite unfathomable here, where we are several hundred miles from any land. It affords a lively emblem of the depth of the Divine mercies.

"We are now beginning to feel the influence of the trade-winds, and to go from five to eight knots in an hour. The idea of being in a wooden house of this kind, so far from land or human help, is sometimes awful, —within a plank of eternity—within the power of a blast; but the Christian's mind turns to its stronghold, and soon feels in safety. Besides, the preservation from day to day soon takes away all feeling of danger. This it is, I suppose, that hardens sailors in general.

"*Sunday, June* 23, *at sea.* We had service on deck this day, it being fine, though the wind is high. When there is a disposition in the captain for public worship, how easily are all other obstacles overcome! I preached from Luke xiv. 28—30. The men seemed attentive.

"*Monday, July* 1, 1816, *within sight of Barbadoes.* We lay to from ten to four in the night, and at breakfast-time, the mate from the mast-head discovered land. The news soon spread through the ship. Every eye was directed towards the spot, and at length it became evident it was land. The captain was in some doubt at first whether it was Barbadoes. Every telescope was in use, and at length we were satisfied it was the right island.

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"Ah! when shall we thus long for the heavenly shore? When shall we be continually looking through the telescope of faith for that, and be equally fearful lest we come to the wrong place. Thus my mind wandered till it was fixed on the wise and skilful Captain of our salvation, who will take care to bring His people to their home."

The watchful providence of God still kept His servant from every danger. The middle passage from Sierra Leone to Barbadoes was considered very unhealthy. Lieutenant Allen, one of the passengers who came on board in perfect health, was seized with fever, and died soon after they landed at Barbadoes; but Mr. Bickersteth's health was graciously preserved. The fears at one time entertained of a mutiny on the part of the Spanish and French prisoners, proved groundless, and an attempt at rebellion on the part of two sailors, which at first the whole ship's company seemed disposed to second, was speedily put down. The following remarks occur in the journal on that occasion.

"O that I may learn how great my mercies are, and on what a slender thread every earthly good hangs! My Saviour has all power in heaven and earth, and neither man nor disease can touch me without His permission, who died on the cross for me."

Immediately on his arrival he inquired for ships sailing for England. He had some difficulty in meeting with one which would accommodate his whole party; for the widow of one of the missionaries, and the little child of another, with her nurse, accompanied him, as well as Simeon Wilhelm. He remained above a week in Barbadoes, preached on the Sunday to a large congregation in St. Michael's, Bridgetown, paid two visits to the Mora-

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vian settlement, and enjoyed some Christian intercourse with a few religious officers on the island.

In the Lady Sherbrooke, the vessel in which he sailed from Barbadoes, he missed the religious privileges he had enjoyed in the Echo, but the Lord himself was present to his soul, and the leisure he enjoyed was a welcome opportunity for study.

"*At sea, July* 20, 1816. The sun set very beautifully this evening. The sea was calm and still, excepting a gentle swell and ripple, the air was cool and pleasant after the meridian heat of the day, and the sun gradually descending into the sea, left its glory on the clouds above it. This glowing scene naturally raised my heart to the true Sun of righteousness, and that glorious world where He shines in all His brightness. I could not but long for that happy time when we shall see Him as He is, and know as we are known.

"*August* 7, 1816, *at sea.* We had a calm almost the whole of this day. A calm seems more distressing to sailors than a storm. All are looking out anxiously for a breeze, and sighing because it does not come. Once I felt more what impatience was than I do now. I trust I can now look at all things, even the most minute, as ordered by a Father of infinite power and love, and I know that my chief work is, to ascertain, follow, and rejoice in His will.

"*Tuesday, August* 13, 1816, *at sea.* We have had a stormy night. The wind increased very much in the evening. The circumstances attending such scenes at sea in the evening and at night are peculiar and awful. The howling wind rises by degrees. The ship scuds along with great rapidity and power—the clouds gather thicker

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—the darkness increases—all hands are called upon deck —the sails are taken in, one by one, till only three or four are left. There is often considerable difficulty in getting them in; the poor sailors tug and pull with all their might, and with their usual singing, or rather groaning: some are sent up the masts to take reefs in the topsails, and hang upon a rope or a boom in the midst of the tempest. In the mean-time the wind still increases, and the ship, with only a few sails, goes ten knots an hour. The sailors have done all they can, and we wait the result of the storm in the hands of Him who commandeth and raiseth the stormy wind, and lifteth up the waves of the sea. Those waves dash and roar against the side of the ship, but are not able to reach us. We are safe in our ark; but oh! not so safe as those who have Jesus for their ark and refuge. My soul felt the need of that refuge more and more, and not its need only, but its value also. I remembered the prayers of Schnarré and Rhenius for their captain and sailors, and was glad to follow their example. Perhaps, in the voyage of life, when I get nearer home, I may have more tempests to endure; but, happily, I shall have the same refuge in my God and Saviour.

"*Saturday, August* 17, 1816. We sailed rapidly along up the English Channel, and landed at Dover about three o'clock this afternoon. God be thanked for all His goodness."

His report of his visit to Africa, addressed to the Committee, closes with the following acknowledgment of the mercies he had experienced.

"I cannot but, in conclusion, notice how the kind prayers and wishes of the Committee, in their instructions

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to me, have been graciously answered by the goodness of God. He has indeed ordered all the circumstances of my voyage, my visit, and my return, in mercy. By sailing in the ship Salisbury, and not in the Olive Branch or Echo, as at first designed, I was enabled to get through my visit to the country settlements, and to prepare things for the arrival of the schoolmasters, and I had scarcely finished my work before I had the advantage of a most comfortable vessel and a pious captain, as far as Barbadoes, and a very favourable passage thence to England. I had not a day's illness of any importance, and though much exposed to the weather, was not even wet through more than once, and never prevented from pursuing my plans. These things call for my gratitude first to the Father of mercies, and next to the many friends who I believe favoured me with their prayers. May it please the Lord to reward them sevenfold in their own bosoms, and further, to answer those prayers, by making use of any thing that I may have said or done in my visit to the advancement of his kingdom and glory! Thus may we at length witness the fulfilment of that promise—'Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God.'"

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CHAPTER XII.

ENTERS ON HIS DUTIES AS SECRETARY.

A. D. 1816—1817.

THE scenes which Mr. Bickersteth had witnessed in Africa were well calculated to inflame his missionary zeal. He had tasted the love of God; he knew what it was to hold communion with the Maker of heaven and earth, as with a friend, and to rejoice in the hope of eternal life; and he beheld his fellow-men—beings capable of the same high and heavenly joys—dancing half-naked around devils' houses, placing their trust in rows of beads, setting up a piece of paper, tied with string, as a Mediator between them and God. His soul burned within him, and he longed to rouse British Christians to a full sense of the urgent necessities of the heathen world. When in Africa, he told Mr. Nyländer, he expected to have even less rest in England than he had had with them, as he should probably be fully engaged travelling about, reporting what he had seen. This was the case to an extent far beyond what he had calculated on. For fifteen years, these missionary journeys formed a main feature of his life, and were one of his most important spheres of usefulness. He was not a finished orator—his action in

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speaking was never studied—and there was a peculiarity about his voice, which gave some who heard him for the first time, the impression that he was hastening into a decline; but there was an earnestness in every word, tone, and gesture, a holy simplicity, and a beaming love, which, combined with much practical judgment, and a ready tact in bringing forward those topics most likely to touch the hearts of his hearers, conspired to make him one of the most successful of missionary advocates.

On his first return he was chiefly called upon to describe the scenes of which he had been an eye-witness. When in Africa, he had been a minute and attentive observer of all that passed around him, and had fully recorded each day's events in his journal. At this early state of missionary enterprise, few had returned from the field of labour to describe what was passing in the heathen world; and as he drew vivid pictures of the degradation and misery he had beheld, and then contrasted it with the sweet songs of the children in the Christian School, or the African youths kneeling with him around the table of the Lord, many a heart responded to his earnest appeals. "O my friends!" he concluded his missionary speech at Norwich, a few weeks after his return, "the actual sight of these things, the beholding on one side the miserable degradation of the natives, and on the other the benefits of Christian instruction, gives a totally new sense of the importance of missionary efforts. It may much affect our minds to read of a destructive fire raging at a distance; it may for a moment shock our feelings to read of one after another perishing in the flames; but it raises quite another feeling when we ac-

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tually see the devouring element burst from the windows —when the shrieks of distress pierce our very ears— when our own eyes behold the conflagration spreading and enveloping in its flames one human being after another: then every effort is exerted to provide for the escape of the sufferers, to remove every obstruction, and to quench the fire. Just this difference I now feel respecting missionary efforts. My friends, it is this sight, and sense, and feeling of the perishing condition of Africans, I wish to communicate, and thankful shall I be, if any thing I have said has this effect upon your hearts. Then, amidst every distress of the times in which we live, you will be found not only to contribute yourselves, but to exert all your energies in your respective spheres for promoting the missionary cause."

Mr. Bickersteth himself set a bright example of the energy in the Lord's service which he inculcated on others. He landed in England on Saturday evening. The following day he preached in Mr. Pratt's pulpit on "Gratitude to God for mercies," a subject at that moment specially congenial to his own feelings. Business detained him in London on the Monday. On Monday night, he travelled to Pakefield in Suffolk, where Mrs. Bickersteth was then staying with the Rev. F. Cunningham. On Wednesday, his sermon-list notes a sermon at Pakefield, on Thursday at Norwich: the following Sunday, he was again in London. The beginning of September was spent in Liverpool; here he preached five times between the 4th and 8th of the month. "I felt," he writes, "no fatigue from it, but was rather refreshed in my work; so good a Master do we serve, and so graciously does He bless those who labour for Him." September 15th, he had to preach charity

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sermons for the poor at St. John's, Bedford Row. He had been so occupied, that he felt wholly unprepared for this service, but after the sabbath he wrote, out of the fulness of a grateful heart, "God mercifully carried me through yesterday with great success; to Him be all the glory." The sum of £146 was collected at the two sermons, being much more than was expected. I had been anxious and depressed before I preached, but found relief as usual, in delivering my testimony for God."

The remainder of the month was occupied with important missionary meetings in Norfolk and Suffolk. "I am utterly unprepared," he wrote, "for the Norfolk and Suffolk anniversaries, and must simply look to Him who has helped me hitherto, and will never fail those who trust in Him."

He had not, however, neglected to excite his friends there to make those previous preparations for the anniversary, of the importance of which he was so well aware. "I sincerely hope," he wrote, "Brereton and Girdlestone will be successful in exerting themselves by correspondence, by advertising, and by paragraphs also every week. Every thing depends, under God, on circulating information extensively. T. must help us. These anniversaries were specially blessed of God, and are noted in the Missionary Register, as a season when new and general feeling was excited in behalf of the cause of Christ among the heathen."

These journeys often implied much domestic and personal sacrifice. On his return from Africa, Mrs. Bickersteth's health did not allow her to accompany him. When separated from her, he wrote to Mr. Wilson. "I could only stay two or three days with my dear wife, and feel

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our present separation a trial; yet we know he has done all things well. An unmingled cup is seldom good for us and therefore not given here;—hereafter, the river of the water of life will be not only full of water, but clear as crystal. Then, my beloved friend, we, and all the Church of God shall not find such difficulties in meeting together, but ever be with the Lord. The intervening time is but short, may we lay it all out more and more in our Master's service, redeeming every moment of it here, till it conduct us to the bosom of eternal love."

In the beginning of October, he and Mrs. Bickersteth took possession of their new abode at the Church Missionary House, but he was not to rest there long: on the 18th of October we find him again at Exeter, assisting a newly-formed association which had arisen amidst difficulty and opposition in that city. The following enthusiastic letter to Mr. Pratt, describes the success of the cause there.

Exeter, October 17th, 1816.

MY DEAR SIR,

God be thanked for all his mercies, we have just had the most spiritual, holy, and heavenly Missionary meeting which I ever attended. Mr. Cowan, who was present, said it exceeded the Bristol meeting. The Lord Jesus was magnified, and his grace abundantly vouchsafed to those who spoke, and those who heard. The Bible Society Meeting was quite poor and formal in comparison; yet, blessed be God, many spoke well for the Bible. Exeter never had, I believe, since it was a city, the name of Jesus so sweetly proclaimed and brought forward. Surely the Lord was with us, to Him be glory.

But you will say, what fruit? Altogether, about £150 has been

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raised, and I doubt not it will grow and increase yet abundantly; so as possibly to yield £300 this year, instead of £5 which it formerly produced. But really the feelings excited are worth more than any money. Exeter has some warm hearts, that will yet, by prayer and work, turn this old city upside down, and cause it to yield abundant tribute to the Lord.

Ever, affectionately yours,
E. BICKERSTETH.

P. S.—We counted nine clergymen; there ought to have been ninety.

At the close of October he was at Lynn, where he preached twice and addressed a meeting. His strength, however, did not equal his willingness for the work, and his voice suffered so materially from these repeated exertions, that his medical adviser insisted on some weeks of rest. The state of his own heart during this season of comparative quiet, is recorded in the following meditation written before partaking of the holy sacrament.

"*Sunday morning, November 3rd,* 1816. I think that the prevailing bent of my mind is, as the redeemed creature of God, to make it my chief object to do His will, and I further think, that His Spirit has brought me to some conformity to that will. I know also, that it is my highest happiness to love and enjoy God, and I am persuaded that I can truly say, I have found that sweetness in looking up to Him as my Father and my Portion, through the all-precious Saviour Jesus Christ, which I would not part with for all the world.

It is my earnest desire to grow in these things, and readily and wholly to give up every thing inconsistent with, yea, not directly promoting, the gaining the favour

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and love of God in Christ Jesus. I do feel my heart overflow sometimes, with the grace of Him that loved us even unto death.

" Thus far I can see the work of the Spirit on my soul, but when I look on the other side, I see also much of the work of corruption.

" Let me consider my relative duties.

" *As a minister*, my main object is, to deliver the message of God, and win precious souls to Christ; yet, O how often I preach myself, and not the Lord Jesus. I have found this in almost every sermon, and perhaps it is on this account that the Lord has now laid me aside. I do not reproach myself with indolent neglect of my duties, but I do with want of simplicity, and singleness of aim. I do with self-seeking. . . . .

" *In my situation in the Missionary Society.* I have great cause to be thankful to the Father of mercies, who has carried me with comfort and acceptance, through my very important duties. But, O how often has my alloy adulterated his gold; how often I have been seeking rather to shine than to edify; rather the glory of man than the approbation of God! O let it not be true of me,—' Verily they have their reward.' I thank God for affliction in this view.

" *As a child of God* I often keep out of my Father's presence. I often forget my covenant relation to Him in Jesus Christ, the first-born of many brethren. I am an undutiful, perverse, rebellious child; yet still a child, the spirit of adoption crying, Abba! Father!—the spirit of love which at times makes me joy in God, my God, —the spirit of submission helping me to say in all things, ' It is the Lord!'—these things tell me I am a

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child. Ah! why then do I not dwell continually in the presence of the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort.

"*As a disciple of Jesus Christ*, I do love my Saviour; if ever I felt the affection of love, I feel it for Jesus who died for me, who has recovered me from hell, who has restored to me peace and happiness here, and gained for me heaven hereafter. Yet the test is, 'If ye love me, keep my commandments.' And, O Saviour, how little of Thy self-denial, of Thy patience, of Thy humility and deadness to the world, and faith, and prayer, and love, and all that marked Thy character, have I! Give, O give Thy Spirit. Now, I would go to the table of the Lord, hoping to find His presence peculiarly manifested in the breaking of bread, and hoping to gain larger supplies of His grace, that the work of corruption in my heart may be more and more controlled and subdued, and that the work of grace may vigorously proceed."

When he was not travelling for the Society, Mr. Bickersteth's time was occupied with weighty duties at the Missionary House, at the head of which, he and Mrs. Bickersteth were now placed. The Students there were under his care, and boarded at his table, and he had to assist Mr. Pratt in the general management of the Society's affairs. "I never," he wrote to his parents, in November 1816, "needed your prayers so much, so very much as now. Almost every hour, the most important business affecting the Redeemer's glory and kingdom, is coming before me, and who is sufficient?" Again, in December 1816 he wrote; "I feel it to be a vast mercy and privilege, that I am now so placed, that nearly every moment is engaged in the immediate work of God, yet this brings

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its peculiar temptations, and I feel the dangers of it. It is a great comfort to have the dear Missionaries in the house. They are quiet, meek, and diligently attending to their studies."

Mr. Bickersteth's only regular ministerial charge in London, was the afternoon congregation at Wheler Chapel, Spitalfields, which like many other afternoon congregations was very small; and his frequent absence tended to scatter it. By the beginning of December, his voice was sufficiently recovered, to allow of his preaching at Leicester for the Society. He was in the habit of keeping a sermon-list, noting the texts on which he had preached, and the places where the sermons were delivered. The list of this year, including sermons preached on the wide ocean to the different ship's crews, with whom he had sailed,—others, to black men, on the shores of heathen Africa; others in the island of Barbadoes, records eighty sermons since his ordination in the previous December, and closes with the words ever in his heart, and on his lips; "Glory be to God for the mercies of this year."

In the beginning of January 1817, he preached and attended a meeting at Cheltenham, and after this, had two months' quiet at the Church Missionary House. The weakness of his voice continued to be a trial to him. The following entry occurs in his Journal, March 2nd, 1817. "God is love. This is the grand character of my Portion and my Inheritance. All his perfections unite in this centre of love. His power is the exercise, His justice the guard, His wisdom devises the working of love. God is love. Holy Spirit bring this truth continually home to my soul. Let the love of God in Christ Jesus so fill

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my soul, that all meaner affections may merge, or be under the control of Divine love.

"I could not but bless the Lord almost with tears this morning for my weakness, my difficulties in speaking, and the brokenness of my poor earthen vessel, because I saw in these things His love, which, wisely foreseeing my danger from pride, thus keeps me humble. O how wise is God, how infinitely wiser and kinder is God to us, than we are to ourselves."

It was hoped that change of air might recruit his strength, and in the beginning of March, he commenced a Missionary tour to the West of England, which lasted six weeks. The Missionary engagements of such a journey, and the distractions arising from perpetual change of scene, might appear sufficient to have occupied his whole attention, but he found time to carry on the revision of the third edition of his "Scripture Help," a work in which he was assisted by Mr. Kinghorn, an able Baptist Minister at Norwich. Encouraged by the success of his first book, he had also commenced a 'Treatise on Prayer,' and was engaged with it, whenever he could obtain sufficient quiet. It was the great privilege of these journeys, that they introduced him to so many eminent Christians;—on this tour he visited Mr. Grimshawe, at Biddenham, Mr. Legh Richmond, at Turvey, and Mr. Gipps, at Hereford, friends with whom he afterwards maintained delightful Christian intercourse, and all of whom he has now met before the throne of God. A few extracts from his letters to Mrs. Bickersteth, will give a view of his progress, of the domestic sacrifices which his journeys often implied, and of the blessings which attended them.

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Biddenham, March 8th, 1817.

"I preached last night, almost wholly extempore, to a large congregation of poor, at Risely, from Rev. i. 5. I was carried through, but I do not like the plan, and think I shall never adopt it, till driven into it. I was nearly an hour preaching, not knowing how the time passed. I do not feel worse for it to-day, but mean to be more cautious of lengthened exertions. I stayed all night at Risely, and came on this morning to Bedford. My errand gives me a hearty welcome wherever I go. O that I may derive suitable edification from my converse with so many of the excellent of the earth.

Turvey, March 12th, 1817.

Through God's mercy, though I do not much love my wandering life, yet I think it is beneficial to my health. I have not yet in any respect suffered from exertion. . . We had an interesting meeting at Bedford. . . I am somewhat grieved about my poor Wheler Chapel congregation. It is one of the hardest parts of my situation, that I have no regular care over a flock; but the will of the Lord be done in all things; happily, it always designs the happiness of His redeemed. Yes, OUR happiness, my beloved wife, though our present separation be such a trial to us both. My very affectionate remembrances to all the dear young friends that surround our table. May their kind prayers be abundantly recompensed to them. I am hourly receiving, almost visibly, the benefit of them. I enjoy much pleasure in intercourse with the dear Christian friends with whom I have been staying. Legh Richmond has been particularly kind. He has a large and interesting family. I am now writing in his study, surrounded with all the old fathers and writers. He has shewed me an original letter from the Dairyman's Daughter.

Hereford, March 20th,

God has been very gracious to me in this city, and, I trust, has owned my Ministerial labours, as well as my Missionary. I preached

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last night to a large and deeply attentive congregation from Acts xxvi. 18. Depressed more than usual before I went, I yet found, in an uncommon measure, the presence and help of God, carrying me beyond my subject, and helping me to make known His truth. A very serious impression seemed to be made on the congregation, and I hear some interesting accounts of the effects produced. I mention these things, that you may unite with me in thanking God for His unmerited goodness and love.

We had an immense assembly at the Bible Meeting on Tuesday, and I was carried through with comfort, though I reserved my strength for yesterday evening.

I am taking great care of my health, for I ride out every day, and, I trust, that I am really gaining strength, both of body and voice. A month ago, I could not possibly do what God now enables me to do. Thanks, all thanks to Him for His boundless mercies. We can never praise Him enough. What a cheering thing it was to me to hear, that my wife's health was improving. You have had much of my prayers, especially for your soul's prosperity. I think I can say, your eternal happiness is the main thing I wish concerning you; but it is a great comfort, that godliness hath the promise both of this life and the next.

I am trying to get on in leisure moments with the tract on prayer. I should be glad if I could promote Christ's kingdom in this thing, but sadly feel, that I myself want more of that spirit of devotion which I would recommend to others. Mr. Gipps is very kind in giving me leisure and a fire in my bed-room. I think that I shall make a point, if practicable, wherever I go, of spending a good portion of my time in retirement. It is the only way in which my soul can live in the midst of the changes, and bustles, and important scenes into which the providence of God thus leads me.

Bristol, March 22. I ought to have sent off this letter from Hereford, but it was too late for the post. I arrived here between six and seven this evening. Judge of my strength; I was able to preach last night with great ease at Newlands. Judge of my

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prudence; I declined preaching more than once to-morrow, though Mr. Biddulph offered me his pulpit.

Bristol, March 25, 1817.

Our minds are, I fear, still to be exercised, humbled, and proved by the weakness of your health; though I do desire to be very thankful that it is improving. Were I to follow merely natural inclinations, I should set off this night and be with you to-morrow; but a subdued will is far better than following one's own desire.

Mr. Daniels would tell you that Fenn goes with me to Plymouth and Cornwall.

March 26. Having to preach this evening, I cannot spare much of the time for my beloved wife. I have been thinking of those words, (Psalm cxix. 57,) "*Thou* art my portion, O Lord: I have said that I would keep thy word," as applicable to us now. Are we not, notwithstanding our avowed and fixed purpose of conformity to God's will, making other things our portion. I am sure that I fear I have often made my wife, my usefulness, and other things short of God, my portion. May He pardon and accept us.

I have just been hearing a most interesting sermon from Mr. Corrie. Collection near £114; they do nobly at Bristol.

At Plymouth Mr. Bickersteth had reason to think that the high Calvinism, tending to Antinomianism, preached by Dr. Hawker, had seriously paralyzed their exertions. He thus describes the Plymouth meeting, in a letter written from Bodmin, April 2, 1817.

Our most formidable affair was Tuesday evening at Plymouth. The President of the Chamber of Commerce allowed us the use of a room in the Exchange, and it was well filled. We did not, however find it at all expedient to think of forming an Association, but I and Fenn addressed them at some length, and endeavoured to excite them to stir in the matter. An interest seemed to be ex-

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cited, but we only collected between three and four pounds at the door; and such is the effect of Dr. Hawker's doctrines, that I fear nothing effectual can be done in that large town for extending Christ's kingdom.

I think the travelling has done my health good, but the continual speaking has been rather too great an exercise for my naturally weak voice. I hope, however, that I shall not materially suffer, and it is delightful to me to spend what strength I have in the service of the very best of Masters.

Padstow, April 3, 1817.

Two things much affected me in your last letter: your continual pain and suffering, and your conformity to the Divine will under it and all His dispensations. I again felt a strong inclination to come to you immediately, and leave Fenn in Cornwall; surely, I thought, I ought not to leave my Sarah at this time, but the first part of your letter seemed an answer to my wishes and inclinations, and to tell me, "Be still, and know that I am God: go on in thy work, and leave thy wife in my hands." May I be enabled to do so with a quiet and believing mind. I know that you are in a Father's hand. I know that He loves you better than I do. I know He hears prayer, and I leave you always in His hands, to bless you and do you good, and here I take my rest. The Lord is my refuge and my strength, and, blessed be His name, my Sarah's refuge and strength also.

Cornwall does not promise much success. It is in a very dull state. Bodmin has not the Gospel, and if we raise £5, it is as much as is expected. The Gospel has long been preached here in Padstow, and we may expect more fruits, though the population is much smaller.

Falmouth, April 12, 1817.

The curate at St. Austel, not having given sufficient notice, we had not a full congregation, but collected £6 10s. I saw there, through the kindness of a Mr. Blackmore, a tin and a copper mine,

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and witnessed the labours of man for the world's gain, and learned to blush for Christians. I got to Falmouth on Thursday night; we had a full meeting in the Church last night. Falmouth, however, does not produce orators, and all the speaking almost, lay on Fenn and myself. I hope the result of the meeting will be very profitable to the missionary cause.

In the summer, Mr. Bickersteth undertook another extensive Missionary circuit in the Northern and Midland counties, which occupied about thirteen weeks. Part of the time Mrs. Bickersteth was with him. When he returned to Liverpool, in the beginning of September, he had the pleasure of marrying his youngest sister to the Rev. R. Mayor, who had devoted himself to the Missionary work in Ceylon. He heartily sympathized in the prospects opening before his sister. "Charlotte," he wrote, "has high honours and a blessed eminence before her. May she be abundantly prepared for them, and may all our minds and hearts be prepared to rejoice in the goodness of God, in honouring our whole family, by sending one of its members to labour among the heathen! My father will, I think, be more honoured and loved here and in heaven, as the parent of a Missionary's wife, than as the parent of all his other children. I know we have not faith enough here, and this is our sin as well as our ignorance and unbelief." When a desirable situation was offered to Mr. Mayor, to induce him to remain in England, Mr. Bickersteth wrote: "Mayor had already given up the world for the sake of Christ, and it was not to be expected that any worldly gain would move him. The crown of glory he seeks, and, by the grace of God, he and Charlotte will gain, throws into contempt the largest income, the most profitable and pleasurable of earthly

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stations. I do not make light of parental feelings and the ties of nature; but the love of Christ and his glory are to the Christian of infinitely more moment. Nor ought Mayor and C., on any earthly consideration whatever, to draw back from the blessed work to which they have been called."

It would be impossible to trace the details of all the Missionary journeys of the next fifteen years.* The abun-

* The following list of Mr. Bickersteth's public engagements in the year 1817, has been taken partly from his Sermon-list, partly from the Missionary Register. The Sermons he preached in London are not noted.

Jan.	5. Cheltenham,	Sermon.
	8. Cheltenham,	Meeting.
Mar.	7. Risely,	Sermon.
	9. Bedford,	Sermon.
	11. Bedford,	Meeting.
	12. Turvey,	Meeting.
	16. Hereford,	Sermon.
	17. Hereford,	Meeting.
	19. Hereford,	Sermon.
	21. Newlands,	Sermon.
	23. Bristol,	Sermon.
	26. Bristol,	Sermon.
	27. Bristol,	Meeting.
	30. Plymouth Dock	Sermon.
	31. Plymouth Dock	Meeting.
April	1. Plymouth,	Meeting.
	4. Padstow,	Sermon.
	6. Bodmin,	Sermon.
	7. Bodmin,	Meeting.
	9. St. Austel,	Sermon.
	11. Falmouth,	Meeting.
	13. Helstone,	Sermon.
	14. Penzance,	Meeting.
	Helstone,	Meeting.
	27. Colchester,	Sermon.
	28. Colchester,	Sermon.
	29. Colchester,	Meeting.
May	London Anniversaries.	
June	15. Sutton Colfield	Sermon.
	Tamworth,	Sermon.
	16. Kirdworth,	Sermon.
	20. Alrewas,	Sermon.
	22. Stafford,	Sermon.
	Castlechurch,	Sermon.
	23. Stafford,	Meeting.
	25. Newcastle,	Sermon,
	29. Ashbourne,	Two Sermons.
	30. Ashbourne,	Meeting.
July	3. Ashbourne,	Sermon.
	6. Manchester,	Sermon.
	Holmwood,	Sermon.
	9. Manchester,	Meeting.
	10. Salford,	Sermon.
	13. Liverpool,	Two Sermons.
	18. Latchford,	Meeting.
	20. Tadcaster,	Two Sermons and Meeting.
	23. Hull,	Two Sermons.
	24. Hull,	Meeting.
	27. York,	Two Sermons.
	29. York,	Meeting.
Aug.	3. Hessle,	Sermon.
	Beverley,	Sermon.
	10. Tunstal,	Sermon.
	Kendal,	Sermon.
	11. Kendal,	Meeting.

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dant labours of the year 1817 may be seen by a reference to the foot-note. The Missionary spirit this year made rapid progress through the country, and Mr. Bickersteth's exertions were one great means of helping forward the general awakening of the Church on this all-important subject. The benefit of public meetings, which some had been disposed to doubt, was now generally acknowledged; for it was found that a missionary spirit was spread in proportion as information was widely diffused. Annual meetings were multiplied through the country, new associations arose in many places, collectors came forward to gather the pence of the poor, ladies' branch-associations were formed; and the result of all this growing activity was a rise in the funds of the Society, from £19,045, which it had reached in the year ending May, 1817, to £24,397 the following year. The revival of a missionary spirit brought down a new blessing on the Church at home. "We have been assured," wrote Mr. Pratt in the Register, "by several faithful and excellent ministers, as well as by some eminent and aged private Christians,

Aug.	12.	Tunstal,	Meeting.	12.	Shrewsbury, Sermon.
	13.	Casterton,	Meeting.	24.	Norwich, Meeting.
	17.	Rotherham,	Two Sermons.	25.	Norwich, Sermon.
		Swinton,	Sermon.	28.	Saffron Walden Sermon.
	18.	Rotherham,	Meeting.	30.	Littlebury, Sermon.
	21.	Knaresboro',	Meeting.	Oct. 22.	Ipswich, Sermon.
	24.	Leeds,	Two Sermons.		Ipswich, Meeting.
	25.	Leeds,	Meeting.	Nov. 9.	Birmingham, Two Sermons.
		Pontefract,	Meeting.		Birmingham, Meeting.
	29.	Collingham,	Meeting.	16.	Epsom, Two Sermons.
	31.	Derby,	Two Sermons.	30.	Chippenham, Sermon.
Sept.		Derby,	Meeting.		Corsham, Sermon.
	4.	Liverpool,	Sermon.	Dec. 1.	Bath, Meeting.
	7.	Preston,	Sermon.	3.	Foston, Sermon.
	10.	Wellington,	Sermon.	4.	Leicester, Sermon.
	11.	Shrewsbury,	Meeting.	5.	Nottingham, Meeting.

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that the most happy effects have been produced, by bringing this cause before congregations, not only from the revival of religious feeling in the hearts of Christians, but in the awakening of others who had never before felt the value of their own souls."

In the midst of this prosperity, opposition soon arose. At the meeting at Bath, Archdeacon Thomas came forward, and disturbing in an unwarrantable manner the proceedings of the meeting, to which only friends of the cause had been invited, delivered a violent invective against the Society. His address was afterwards printed: This opposition was however overruled for good; an able defence was at once put forth by the Rev. D. Wilson, and subscriptions flowed in faster than ever. One person sent £5 because the attack was so bad, and afterwards £5 more, because the defence was so good. It was judged worth-while to put the whole Defence as an advertisement in the Times newspaper. "You know," Mr. Bicksteth wrote at the time to his parents, "how we have been attacked at Bath, but you can hardly imagine what good this attack is doing us. The Defence, a copy of which is sent you in a Times paper of this night, has excited great attention, and procured many fresh subscribers. All our friends, in every part of the country, seem animated and encouraged. The very attack led some to think favourably of the cause, who had no thought of it before. It is a good thing to have no aim but to know and follow the truth, for that must prevail. Were I not wholly convinced our cause is the cause of God, and therefore must and will prevail, when every other shall be confounded, I would soon leave it."

In such a work as that in which he was now engaged,

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Mr. Bickersteth could not but delight. "I am sometimes," he writes, "almost overwhelmed with the sense of God's goodness in placing me in such a scene of usefulness, and permitting me to take any part in those great works which are now going on in the world. How highly has God honoured our family, in calling so many of us in different ways, to labour in advancing the kingdom of Christ."

But while he rejoiced in his work, he was fully alive to the spiritual dangers to which it exposed him. From Barbadoes he had written to his parents—"I tremble at the prospect of the duties I have undertaken at home. Had it pleased God, a small village in the country would have suited my inclination better than that large sphere to which I seem called. But all is in God's hands, and therefore all is and will be well." To his friend, the Rev. W. C. Wilson, he had written soon after his return: "I quite tremble for myself in the important and responsible duties daily coming upon me, especially in the ministry. I feel that the dangers of the soul, in its spiritual course, are far more serious than the waves of the sea, the climate of Africa, and the passions of savages, as it respects the body. Yet, let us gather courage in looking at the Captain of our salvation, and following Him fully wherever He calls us. Thus in His strength may we be strong, while we are very low in ourselves." To his wife, he wrote about the same time: "May all the kindness of friends make us more humble and more devoted to Him, who makes them kind. We want this more than any thing else,—more humility, more devotion, deadness to the world, and zeal for Christ. We are in very great danger just now,—emerging into public notice, and per-

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haps not having the ballast of humility sufficiently deep to keep us steady. God grant we may never dishonour Him and His cause by inconsistency, vanity, and folly. Let us be humble, prayerful, and full of love, and God will give us whatever is good for us." On his Northern Tour, in the summer of 1817, he wrote from Doncaster: "I am receiving every kindness from the good people here. I feel myself utterly unworthy of the kindness of our Saviour's servants, and of the company of the men with whom I am now associated. It has appeared to me, that after my African tale has been generally told, it will be my plain duty to retire and stay at home, as much as practicable. It is quite enough to ruin any young minister, even had he far more grace than I have, to be thus brought forward."

This was not, however, the will of God concerning him; too manifest a blessing had rested on his missionary advocacy to allow of his retiring and remaining at home. His African tale might lose its novelty, but he found no lack of subjects of missionary interest. At the Society's house, the correspondence of missionaries in every part of the world was open to him. He knew of their earnest appeals for help, of the thick darkness of crime and heathenism which surrounded them, of the blessing which rested on their labours, and the fresh openings appearing on every side for the spread of Divine truth. He saw all these labours cramped for want of means to send forth more men, or fully to meet the requests of those engaged in the work. He shared the anxiety and responsibility of forming engagements in dependence on an uncertain and fluctuating income, and as he travelled through the length and breadth of the land, and saw the abundance

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of England's wealth, and the luxury which teemed on every side, he could plead with thrilling effect the claims of a perishing world, and echo in the ears of British Christians the appeals for help he had received from the distant missionary.

He made careful preparation for his journeys: he had always with him notes, containing data as to the condition of the Society's stations abroad, as well as its funds at home. Under the head of the different stations, anecdotes were referred to, that were likely to interest his hearers. Local circumstances, connected with the towns he visited, were carefully noted. If a town had in past times enjoyed any special privileges, he would urge these as motives why its inhabitants should walk worthy of them; if the subscriptions had declined, he would remind them of their former love, and exhort them to return to their first works.* He would provoke Christians to a godly jealousy, reminding the inhabitants of larger towns, what had been done in smaller and poorer places. In all this there was a mingled frankness and courtesy; the boldness that feared not to reprove, combined with the love that thought no evil, and hoped all things. He disarmed opposition, and was enabled to deliver many a faithful message, that would scarcely have been borne from the lips of a messenger less beloved.

Sometimes the notes of his speeches contained the

* Thus he wrote to his friends at Liverpool, 1817. "I really begin to fear that nothing will be done at Liverpool for the Church Missionary Society this year. It does less for its size than any town in the kingdom. If Mr. J. is returned, or Mr. B. is visible, can you ascertain from them whether I can have their pulpits, about the end of August or the beginning of September, or what they propose to do this year; what friends they wish to come? The small town of Tamworth and its neighbourhood, simply by a little exertion, raise between £300 and £400."

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headings of some spiritual thought which he was anxious to impress; the following on Dependence on God may be taken as a specimen:

"*Why should we depend?*—His almighty power—His boundless love—His omnipresence—'Lo! I am with you.'

"*How should we depend?*—Not doing nothing. O no—Not giving nothing. O no—Confiding much. What a Friend we have—Praying much—Giving much—Working much."

He was gathering fresh materials during his journeys; for in his note-book he would mark the striking thoughts or interesting anecdotes of other speakers, and he had a peculiar faculty of turning these to immediate account. His mind was ever active, and he had always one great object in view—his Master's work; here was the secret of his accomplishing so much. On his return home, these papers were put by, and were ready for use, if again wanted. Stores of them, the accumulation of thirty years, have been found among his manuscripts; the last packet tied up with the missionary publications of October 1849, marked with the label "Church Missionary Society," as it had been used on the last journey, laid by for his next tour. Little did he know how nearly his missionary work was ended. When those now silent lips open again, it shall not be to plead for the perishing heathen, but to join in the triumphant song, "The kingdoms of the world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ!"

Special enjoyments and blessings were granted him on these Missionary journeys, to compensate for the domestic trials they often occasioned. Sometimes his travelling companions were men like Legh Richmond, Josiah Pratt, Mr. C. Bridges, or the present Bishop of Calcutta.

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The messengers of the Churches seldom failed, wherever they went, to meet with some hospitable Gaius; so that if they slept at an inn, it came to be marked as a proof of Missionary deadness. In the communion of saints, which this implied, Mr. Bickersteth had special delight; —those who remember him on these occasions, could scarcely realise the natural reserve of his character; it was entirely banished, by the glow of love in his own heart, and the happy confidence he felt, that that love would find a response among the friends he was to meet. Wherever he went amidst Christian brethren, he was as a child at home. "I wish ever," he wrote, "to have the most devoted servants of Christ for my most attached friends, and ever to give them most of my time and affectionate attention, not minding high things, but holy things." For Christians, the sympathies of his heart were ever open, he could feel for their sorrows, and delight in their domestic joys. "One rejoices to see God thus blessing his servants," was the spontaneous expression of his heart, when relating a mercy shown to a friend's family. Envy was excluded, by the simplicity of his love to Christ, his Saviour's work was his work, and the gifts and graces which enabled his brethren to carry it on with success, were all his gain. His society was widely and deeply valued. "I do trust," he wrote to Mrs. Bickersteth, on one occasion, "I am made instrumental in promoting the good of the families where I come, and that thus a most extensive sphere of ministerial usefulness is opened before me. I find a glow of Christian sentiment and feeling in these journeys, which I hardly ever feel at home, and I am often strengthened to a plainness of speaking for Christ, for which I desire to bless God my

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Saviour." "What a work has God called me to," he wrote in another letter, "not only as a Minister, but as an Evangelist, going from place to place to stir up the hearts of His servants. Surely I need a fire from above, to warm first my own cold heart."

The labour connected with these journeys was often very great, and increased with the growing progress of the Society. As associations multiplied, the engagements of the Missionary deputations became of necessity more crowded. Travelling was also far more fatiguing in days when a journey from Exeter to London was the work of a night and day, and the passage from Holyhead to Dublin might, as Mr. Bickersteth once experienced, occupy three days and two nights. His work was often so closely timed, that he had to hasten from the coach to the platform, or from the platform to the coach. The public duties resting on him, formed but a part of the strain upon his mental powers. In almost every house where he was received, he found parties of Christian friends assembled, to meet the deputation of the Society; all looked to him for information, counsel, and spiritual profit, and the hours of social converse, and family devotion, were only second in importance to more public services. Amidst these labours, God however graciously supported him, giving him health and strength to go through them with comfort. "Through God's mercy," he wrote, on one occasion, "I am going on my way, well worked, but strong to labour, and what more can a Christian man desire, but that his heart should be *with his Saviour in his work?* Mine is greatly vagrant, but I know what a Saviour I serve, and in Him I do rejoice, while I cannot have confidence anywhere else." God

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graciously also preserved him, while thus fully occupied in public labours, from the harassing doubts as to his own acceptance with God, which had often spread a gloom over his earlier days. Quiet confidence in the salvation of Christ had removed his fears, and as he looked back upon his course, he felt, that through God's mercy it had been an upward and heavenward path. The following reflections occur in his Journal for November 1817.

"The path of the just, is as the shining light which shineth more and more into the perfect day." I am this morning to preach (D. V.) from this text; Do I preach from my own experience? Is this my path? When I trace back my course, I do think, through Divine mercy, that though there have been many backslidings, there has been a manifest progress in light, knowledge, comfort, and usefulness. And yet I sometimes sigh for the simplicity, earnestness, and fervour of my first years.

"Many of my evils arise from carelessness in the use of the means of grace. A new book, a fresh idea, or an object that seems, and only seems to call for present attention, or offers a present interest and attraction, will lead me from my regular course. But I always find the evil of deviating from the line of duties which I have marked out, and the advantage of adhering to it.

"But I think that God has given me more steadiness in my course, and more consistency. . . But I want grievously, 1. Gravity. 2. Devotional feelings. 3. Self-denial. 4. Faith. 5. A liberal and bountiful spirit. My God, supply all my need, according to Thy riches in glory by Christ Jesus!"

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CHAPTER XIII.

FAMILY CIRCUMSTANCES—WRITINGS, &c.

A. D. 1818—1823.

Mr. Bickersteth had often prayed, that if it were the will of God, he might have children to train up for him, but for many years the request seemed to be denied. No parental ties were to hinder his going forth to accomplish his Master's work in Africa; not long, however, after his return, an answer to his repeated prayer was granted. The prospect filled him with joy. "We look forward," he wrote, "in faith, hope, prayer, and peace." Instead, however, of the gladness he expected, an hour of sorrow was before him, which was to test his submission and confidence in God. In the beginning of February, after a time of severe trial, in which his wife's life was in imminent danger, he had to mourn over the loss of a still-born son. His trust in God did not fail. "How has all gone on?" asked his sister Mary, who was now residing near him. "All well!" was the reply, "my wife is spared to me, and my child is in heaven." The account sent to his parents, concluded with this sentence;—"Help us to thank God for all His mercies to us, while we duly improve the trial of the loss of our babe." His Journal however shews, that he passed at this time through a severe inward conflict.

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"We had several times," he writes, "both in private and together, given this dear pledge of our affections to God: we had also prayed for its life. God has heard our prayer, though in a way we did not expect. He has taken our babe to himself, and given it the best life, the life of glory. Our sweet little one had a short, though rough, passage to its Saviour's presence. We hope to go to it, though it come not to us. I have not before, ever that I know of, had such a grievous trial of my faith, as during the sufferings of my beloved wife;—during much of the time, I had every reason to fear that our babe would be lost, whatever became of its mother. I found little relief in prayer; as it appeared to me, as if I could not lay hold on God's loving-kindness. I had rather new views of His justice and severity. Yet this morning, when hope as to the babe was gone, I found access unto God. And what are God's gracious designs in this blow?

"The deadening of our affections to the world and the creature, by raising them to heaven.

"The immediate happiness of our first-born.

"The manifestation of Christian grace in my beloved wife.

"The proof of affectionate sympathy from many dear friends.

"The bringing us to more entire dedication of ourselves, our substance, and our all to God.

"The reproof of merely natural desires, expectations, and reasonings, and our earthly-mindedness.

"The portion of that tribulation which all God's children have in this world.

"The trial of the faith of those who have prayed for us, as well as of our own.

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"The entire loss of my own will, and the full acquiescence in the will of God.

"The teaching me lessons as a Minister of the first importance in my ministry. As how to deal tenderly with sufferers.—How God may cross our prayers and hopes.—The vanity of earthly prospects.

"The trial of the sincerity of our gift, of this little one to God.

"A new view of his character, as an avenger of sin; no prayer could save the child's natural life.

"O Lord, let Thy powerful Spirit produce in our hearts all those gracious designs which Thy mercy intended in this stroke, even for Christ's sake. Amen.

"And what were God's mercies in this trial?"

Then follows a list of details of God's goodness, among which, with the holy ingenuity which so often enables an eminent believer to read mercy even in judgments;—he reckons the danger his wife had been in, since it had perfectly reconciled him to the loss of the child.

"*February 5th.* My sweet little babe was this morning committed to the tomb."

In the spring of this year, Mr. Bickersteth visited Bristol. The meeting here was exciting; the opposition which had recently been raised in the neighbourhood, had kindled the zeal of the friends of the Society. £181., the largest sum ever hitherto collected at a single meeting, was given on this occasion; and £411 were provided by the efforts of some friends, to cover any defalcations that might arise, in consequence of the attacks that had been made on the Society. The report however announced, that those defalcations, as far as had then appeared,

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amounted to but four annual guineas. Bristol, on the whole, contributed nearly £3000 to the cause of Church Missions, in little more than twelve months. After a visit to the Forest of Dean, and to Hereford, Mr. Bickersteth sailed for Ireland, where he was engaged in Missionary work at Belfast and Dublin. In the summer, he had a long tour, which this year occupied four months, through the Midland and Northern counties. He had the pleasure of witnessing the decided progress of Missionary feeling. Mr. Pratt thus describes it in the Register. "Some of the places which were liberal and zealous in former years, have this year much exceeded in zeal and liberality. Very few have fallen short of former contributions. In many places where nothing had been done before, liberal contributions have been this year made. More associations in aid of the Society have been formed in the course of the last four months, than in any former period of the same duration. Nor must we forget to state, how truly delightful have been many of the scenes of Christian piety and zeal, which the subject of missions has occasioned, both in the journey of the Assistant Secretary, and in those of other friends of the Society. Most affecting have been many of the assemblies of Christian congregations at country churches, on the Sundays or on week-days, when crowded multitudes have listened to the appeals in behalf of Christian Missions; and have contributed in a manner which showed that their hearts were deeply engaged in the subject."

The Sermon-list of the year 1818 records one hundred and eighteen sermons, which were preached in fifty-two different cities or villages. It closes with the motto, doubly underlined, "O Lord! my STRENGTH and my REDEEMER!"

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By the close of the year 1818, the 'Treatise on Prayer' was printed, and sent to his parents, with a letter, of which the following is an extract.

"My ministry, my situation in the Society, the being much in London, and the various calls which in many ways my public character makes upon me, with the necessary attention to the Missionaries, and to my health, leave me less time than you can imagine. You will almost, therefore, be surprised to receive with this, my 'Treatise on Prayer,' at length published; indeed, had not the materials been provided by about twelve sermons which I preached at Wheler Chapel, I could never have got through it. You will, I doubt not, pray that this work also may have the Lord's blessing, and like the 'Scripture Help,' be an instrument of good to some. O if we may but faithfully serve our Saviour on earth, and reach His heavenly mansions hereafter, how will our sorrows be changed into joy, our labour in rest, our uncertainties into joyful possessions."

Mr. Bickersteth often pursued the plan of preaching on the subject on which he was intending to publish. It had the double advantage of concentrating his own meditations on one theme, and of giving his people the benefit of his ripest thoughts. His works were composed in fragments of time, but they were not hastily put together. He would not offer to the Lord that which cost him nothing. He had thought closely and deeply on religious subjects, and had been in the habit of committing those thoughts to paper for many years before he entered the ministry. His theological reading had also been extensive, especially in works of practical divinity. In his writings, he not only drew from his own deep spiritual

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experience, but had a peculiar faculty of appropriating the thoughts of others, if they bore on the subject, so that his works were marked by a cumulative richness of truth. There was no striking originality in them, no bursts of oratory, save that occasionally deep feeling warmed into eloquence, but there was an earnestness of tone, which exactly met the wants of the age. The Church was awakening from a long sleep of barren orthodoxy, and many were aroused to seek earnestly the grace of God. Comparatively few practical works of devotion had then appeared, the treatises of a former age did not properly supply the wants of that time, but in Mr. Bickersteth's works, Christians found the very help they needed. Here was one, who had himself used the *means* of grace, the Scriptures, prayer, the Lord's Table, the ministry of the word, as *means* to attain an object, which had engrossed his soul's desires. He knew the difficulties in the way of rightly employing them; he could tell from experience the best methods of overcoming those difficulties, and the blessedness that flowed from their diligent use. His exhortations met the deepest wants of the Church, and the sale of his works was unusually rapid. Already, in March 1819, he was preparing a second Edition of the 'Treatise on Prayer,' and in July 1820, he wrote, The ninth edition of the abridged Scripture Help, ten thousand copies, as usual, is just published in England, besides those in Ireland, America, and Russia. To God be all the praise! Under Him, this extensive circulation has been much owing to the Bible Society.'

Amidst these outward works of usefulness, the inward conflict was still maintained. "What a field of battle," he writes in his diary, May 10, 1818, "is my heart, and

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how often, after the contest, are the wounded and the dead, the armour and the utensils of war spread together over this field. I fight and am worsted, but, blessed be God, not conquered; for I yet fight again, and I trust in Him, that I shall continue to fight till I do at length conquer. O vile sins! to rob and defraud me of my Saviour's presence and love." Again, at the close of the year, December 24, he wrote: "This is more and more my experience, that I am vile and full of sin, while my Lord is full of grace and truth. May I continually keep returning to Him. May I yet return again and again to the Lord."

In April 1819, he visited Ireland again, attending meetings at Cork, Dublin, and Belfast. From Belfast he sailed by the steam-boat (then a novel mode of travelling) to Glasgow. His voyage is thus described in a letter to his parents.

"After some delightful meetings in Dublin, and preaching at Belfast on Sunday, and attending a meeting there on Monday morning, I proceeded about twelve o'clock in the Belfast and Glasgow steam-packet, and after a very pleasant voyage across the channel and up the Clyde, I arrived at Glasgow at eight o'clock on Tuesday morning—going nearly a hundred and sixty miles in twenty hours—and so smoothly, that, though we had a contrary and rather strong breeze, I was not sea-sick. It is an admirable mode of conveyance. I attend the meeting at Edinburgh on Friday, and then set off for York. To my great disappointment, I am prevented coming through Liverpool. The Liverpool mail leaves Edinburgh on Friday, at the very time that our public meeting here commences. The York mail leaves two hours later, and

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thus just allows me time to speak and get off by it, so as to spend the Sunday at York, and yet be in London at our general Meeting. I had anticipated much pleasure in seeing you, though but for a few hours, but the will of the Lord in all things be done!"

His missionary engagements frequently called for some personal sacrifices. His parents were coming to London in the summer of this year, and he feared he should be absent at the time. He wrote thus: "It is, you know, beloved parents, one part of a Christian's duty to give up his relations, when they interfere with his Saviour's service. Nothing else would induce me to be absent from London when you come, and perhaps circumstances may yet turn out better than we expect. I have always found happiness most advanced by giving up my own wishes for the cause of Christ."

He was not this year so long absent from home as he had been the two previous summers. He made, however, at different times, several distant missionary journeys. His sermon-list contains 106 sermons, and closes with the words, "*Christ is all in all.*"

A cheering proof was at this time afforded of the progress of a missionary spirit through the country, by the fact that the Gospel Propagation Society obtained a King's letter, for sermons to be preached in behalf of their missions in every pulpit,—no such letter having been granted for forty years before. Though the Church Missionary Society did not share the direct benefit, the great cause its members had at heart was advanced, and they could and did rejoice in this public testimony given by the Church and the Government of England, in favour of the once despised cause of Christian missions. Many circumstances

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of the times helped forward the general impulse towards missionary labours. The following extract from the report of 1819 gives a lively view of the state of the world and the church at this time.

"We are labouring in a pacified world! The sword is beaten into the ploughshare, and the spear into the pruning-hook. The elements of discord seem to be enchained as in a prison. The greatest monarchs of the earth are pledging themselves in the presence of one another, and before the world, to act and govern on the laws of the Prince of peace.

"The spirit of enterprize nurtured in a protracted contest is bursting forth in the discovery of new nations. The relations of commerce, broken by war, are renewed, and are extending themselves on all sides. Every shore of the world is accessible to our Christian efforts. The civil and military servants of the crown, throughout its foreign possessions, and of the East India Company in its territories, are freely offering their labour and influence to aid the benevolent designs of Christians. Asia in her northern regions opens to Russian charity; and in her southern, to the beneficence and justice of this country.

"The Cyrus of our day, the truly great Alexander, is placing himself at the head of Christian enterprize as a nursing-father of the Church, and counts it his highest honour to place his crown at the foot of that throne, to which he offers unwearied prayers for a blessing on the labours of Christians, in their attempts to convert the world. Ancient Christian churches are reviving from their slumbers. A spirit of discussion is rising among Mahommedans. The now blessed Henry Martyn has awakened in Persia dissatisfaction with their own creed.

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Hindoo Deists are shaking to the foundations the superstitions of their country. An eagerness after knowledge, and a restless anxiety for something wiser and better than what they now have, are manifesting themselves in every quarter.

"Is this the actual state of things? Then who will not rejoice that the Christian world is moving forward to meet the calls of Providence? The very magnitude and the acknowledged difficulties of this work, will lead the sincere servant of Christ to rejoice that help is preparing in all quarters and of every varied kind. It would be folly to challenge this work to our own circles. No, we see with joy the different denominations of Christians among us, working the work of the Lord as we also do, and we pray that the Spirit of wisdom and counsel may ever rest on them. We see in truth the whole Protestant world in motion—the Episcopal Church of America, the Congregational, the Baptist, the Presbyterian Churches of the New World, and the continental Protestant States are all girding themselves to this holy war. And our common difficulties urge us to unwearied prayers, to mutual charity; while our common success carries us on with lively hope and assured confidence in the blessing of the Lord."

The losses and trials to which the African mission had been exposed, led to serious discussion at home, as to whether Mr. Bickersteth's presence was not again required there. He alludes thus to the circumstance in his journal.

"*August*, 1819. *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* Happy is the mind when it fully comes up to this mark. It is the true way of peace. I want more and more of

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this spirit. We have been seriously conversing about my going again to Africa, and I am ready to follow the Lord's providential leadings, though I feel utterly unfit to be employed on so great a work, and sadly unprepared for that which might very possibly be its issue, even the immediate presence of Jehovah. Can one so vile and sinful be admitted into His glory? is my doubt; and the only resolving of it is in the infinite grace of the Lord's anointed."

At the close of this year, the journal bears more than usual marks of spiritual depression.

"*September* 5, 1819. *Blessed are the eyes that see the things that ye see.* Yes, Lord, if thou hast opened my eyes to see my sinfulness and thy glory, blessed indeed are they! But I find the disease of sin still so cleaves to me, that often I am led to doubt if indeed I be thine. So little purity in my motives, so little Christian simplicity in my conduct, so continually am I turning aside after vanity, that were it not for Christ the Lord, I could have no hope.

"But Christ is my strength! and O may the conviction of my sinfulness and weakness, through the power of the Spirit, only cause me to cling closer to Him! Mighty Saviour! deliver me from vanity and sin—from the world and its snares—from Satan and his wiles. I put my soul into thy keeping."

"*November* 7, 1819. Weary and heavy-laden with the burden of many sins, I have arrived at another resting-post on my journey towards home. Let me then review the last stage. O how seldom I have been the wayfaring man, simply going on toward his home! I have been trifling, loitering, slumbering, and taking my ease. Many

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things which have not been wrong in themselves, have been wrong in the spirit in which I have done them. Sin cleaves to all. It is only in Jesus—in the precious Saviour, (O how precious to poor polluted sinners!) that I see any possibility of hope for me to escape eternal wrath, and obtain eternal glory.

"But I want to honour His name, and I dishonour it by pride, selfishness, reserve, and self-indulgence. I want to be like Him, and thus meet for His heavenly inheritance; and I am impure, carnal, and earthly-minded.

"*December* 5, 1819. O what vigilance does the life of faith call for. All that God has enabled me to work in what is past, will not enable me now to glorify His name. I must still watch and pray, still look to myself, to see my poverty, need, and weakness, and then look to my Saviour for the supply of that need. Lord, quicken me thus to take heed to myself.

"*January* 2, 1820. "My repentance is so cold and slight, my faith in Christ so little influential on my affections, my remembrance of his death so seldom produces the emotions of gratitude and the song of praise; my love is so little removed from selfishness, that I seem to myself a most lame, deformed, decrepid, weak, and worthless Christian. And yet, with all this, I find pride and vanity, notions of fancied superiority working in my heart, notwithstanding the conviction of my sinfulness that is hourly forced upon me.

"O Jesus, I fly to Thee! The salvation of Jesus does comfort my soul; I find it so suited to my wants, so full, so free, so finished and entire, that I do rest my whole soul upon Jesus Christ for time and for eternity. And now what reward shall I render? The Lord enable me

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to determine in His strength to strive against my besetting sins again and again, whenever I am tempted. The Lord enable me to be spiritual and fervent in my private devotions, and specially in the evening. The Lord enable me to keep closer to the study of His word: the Lord enable me to begin this year walking circumspectly—redeeming the time—conscientiously fulfilling all my obligations. Lord, who is sufficient for these things? Thy grace alone is sufficient.

On April 25th, 1820, Mr. Bickersteth was permitted to taste a parent's joy. His journal thus expresses the gratitude of his heart.

"I had, on a former occasion, to record God's gracious dealings with me and my dear wife, on the death of a son in childbirth. I have now, with admiring gratitude, to record his loving-kindness in the birth and preservation of a little daughter. If I had then to mention the loving kindness of my heavenly Father, how much more now. By the former loss He humbled our minds and kept us very dependent on Him.—He led us to pray more, not only for the life of the babe and its mother, but for conformity to His will.—He has greatly enhanced the present mercy. And now, what are the lessons God is teaching me?—A new subject for thanksgiving and praise is now given to me.—A rich and fresh experience that God hears and answers prayer.—A call to set my chief affections, and place my dependence on God alone.—A fresh stimulus to live unreservedly to His glory.—A new call to seek His strength. "It has been forcibly impressed on my mind that my mercies and blessings will only bring greater condemnation, unless I am stirred up to seek, and so to obtain, greater strength to glorify God.

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—The new duties of a parent, especially in prayer for the child.—New views of God's tenderness and love as a father to his children.—A watchful care not to set my heart on any earthly good.

"*May* 7, 1820. The Lord has done great things for us, whereof we are glad: I am sure I may say so in very many respects. In His mercies to my dear wife and child—in His great goodness to the Society with which I am connected, in a delightful anniversary sermon and meeting during the last week: but, above all, in sparing, redeeming, and sanctifying mercies in Christ Jesus. O Lord, to thee I would give all the honour and all the glory—very gracious art Thou. O write Thy mercies in indelible characters on my soul. Let me never forget Thy loving-kindness—never cease to serve Thee!"

About a month after the birth of his child, he removed with his own family and the missionary students to 10, Barnsbury Park, Islington, where he resided above ten years. This house is now surrounded with buildings on every side, but it was then a country residence. The quietness of the situation was a great pleasure to him, and he used to delight in summer evenings to carry his babe out into the fields, and amuse her with the sheep that were feeding there. Barnsbury Park was between two and three miles from the missionary house in Salisbury Square. This regular daily walk was one great means of preserving his health amidst his close mental application. In his care for the improvement of time, he desired to make these walks seasons of spiritual profit. In his Journal the following question is put:—"Whether in my walks I may not advantageously have more fixed subjects of meditation?" He was an early riser, fre-

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quently up at five o'clock, when he used to come down and light his own fire. These morning hours were his most precious time for devotion, study, and composition. At ten o'clock, he went to the Society's house, and the evening was again spent in his study, unless engagements with his Missionary inmates occupied his time. He had the general superintendance of their theological studies, and occasionally gave them evening lectures. He might well say, "From morning to night I am engaged in incessant occupation;" happily, he could add, "a work it is indeed, which I thoroughly enjoy, and am happy and willing to spend myself in it."

Several long Missionary journeys were undertaken this year. Among other places, he visited the Channel Islands. "Mr. Brock," he wrote, "expounds and prays in his family in French. I just understand it, and I long for a French tongue to tell a Saviour's love."

He returned from the Channel Islands by Weymouth, and spent some time in the West of England. "I had many mercies," he afterwards wrote to his parents, "during the whole of my last long journey. Our good cause is everywhere increasing in interest, and it brings me into connection and acquaintance with the very best of Christians in every part of the land. O that I may walk worthy of the many privileges I thus enjoy."

"We have got two fresh New Zealand chiefs, Shunghee, and Why-Ka-Too, with Mr. Kendal from New Zealand. Our babe laughs heartily at their tattooed faces."

He was this year engaged in writing his 'Treatise on the Lord's Supper,' having been stirred up to it, by the very gratifying accounts which he had received of the success of the 'Treatise on Prayer.' He felt strongly

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the personal responsibility which these public labours involved.

"*November 4th*, 1820. I feel that I have made a peculiar profession, and that I am under peculiar obligations, not only as a Minister, but as connected with the Society, and by my various publications, to a life of holiness. Sad will it be, if after teaching others, I myself am a castaway. I feel the danger. I have no strength, but that which God gives. O may He supply my need.

"I do not repel sin in its first approaches, and this it is which gives it so great an advantage over me. God, in great mercy, delivers me from gross sin, but my own corruption continually leads me to the borders of iniquity.

"'My God! subdue mine iniquities. Only thine Almighty arm can vanquish them. I look to thee for victory. Fight for me, fight in me, and may I be more than conqueror, through Him that loved me.'

"Respecting outward things. I have not been punctual in early rising, I have let my dear babe take more of my time than I ought to spare to it. I have neglected self-examination greatly, and my evening prayers are still drowsy and careless.

"Respecting the state of my heart. I have neglected watching over my thoughts, and especially in my walks, in which, as they are now more regular, I might greatly improve my time."

The filial piety, which had always marked Mr. Bickersteth's character, had been deepened by his own experience of a parent's feelings; and in the beginning of 1821, when his beloved Father's health was seriously broken, he was very anxious to administer every comfort in his power, and wrote thus to him :—

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Islington, Jan. 5, 1821.

MY DEAREST FATHER,

I hear an account of your health from Mary, which makes me anxious not to leave town without assuring you of our tenderest sympathy in your sufferings and illness; and our earnest and affectionate prayers to the Father of all mercies for you. I should have rejoiced had it been in my power to come at once to see you; but I am engaged next week at Gloucester first, and then at Bath. It is my earnest prayer, that in this trial you may be enabled to look above yourself, your past life, and all other ground of hope, and look simply and only to Jesus, as your all-sufficient Saviour.

I can hardly express the feelings of affection with which my mind turns to you at this time. I can see in what I feel for my babe, what you felt and did for me, when in my earliest years; and I also remember too accurately, the invariable kindness of my beloved parents, from my earliest years till now, not to be most deeply concerned for my father at this time. If my mother or Robert will tell me that you have any wish to see me, or that my coming would be any comfort to you, I will make every effort to come immediately to Liverpool. In the mean time, you shall have our continued and most earnest prayers, that it may please God to restore you to us, (if it be His will) and to prepare you and us for all His holy will.

Your ever affectionate children,

E. AND S. BICKERSTETH.

For many years, Mr. Bickersteth had had to lament a want of full religious sympathy with his beloved parent; but at length it pleased God graciously to answer the prayers which had been incessantly offered on his behalf, by many affectionate children, and at evening time there was light. This letter was acknowledged with a trembling hand, but in a tone of Christian faith most cheering to his son. "I have two very charming and consoling

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letters to acknowledge from you, which could not fail doing me a great deal of good, and made me truly thankful to the Almighty for giving me so excellent a son. O my Edward, the blessed Saviour is truly precious to me, and my whole dependance is acceptance from God through him, and from his meritorious sufferings and atonement for us."

"How it gladdened our hearts," answered his son, "to hear, dearest father, that all is peace within. That through the blood of atonement, while you see yourself miserable, polluted, and ruined, you yet see salvation, life, and glory. These are the doctrines it is my glory, as the minister of Christ, to preach; these are the doctrines which now fill you with joy and peace in believing. O may we more and more love Him who has so loved us, be humbled before Him in our past neglect of so great a salvation, and seek now to adorn His gospel. Our whole Christian life is penitence and faith—one makes us humble, the other makes us both humble and glad; they ever go together, and are the invariable marks of all the children of God."

When it pleased God, in the following May, to remove his father to his heavenly home, Mr. Bickersteth was able thus confidently to cheer his widowed mother.

"My hope of his state is decided and full. I cannot for a moment doubt, but that the Lord had changed his heart, had renewed his nature, and prepared and made him meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. His meekness and conformity to the divine will, his self-abasement and devotion, his faith and love, marked whose he was, and whom he served. To God be all the glory. May we all so tread in his steps, that as he followed Christ, we may

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also follow him, and be one blessed family above. But I confess my heart sinks within me at the tidings, for though they were such as we had reason to expect, yet the idea of having lost our first, and best, and most tender earthly friend, who had cared for me through all the helpless years of infancy, suffered in my sufferings, and provided for all my wants, and watched over me till I was able to provide for myself, deeply affected me. The good will of God, and his happy state, suppress many a sigh. I hope my beloved mother will now especially attend to her own health, remembering, that she has a double interest in the affections of all her children, whose first wish is, that she may long be spared to us."

This wish was granted, her valuable life was prolonged for eleven years. Her son Edward would fain have had the blessed work of cheering her after her loss. "Could you not spend a few weeks with us at Barnsbury?" he asked; "you should be as quiet, even as we keep the house for our little babe, and, if possible, more welcome to us." He several times offered his house as her home, but felt it a duty not to press this, when he found she wished to remain at Liverpool or with her daughters. She sometimes visited him, and once spent the winter at Barnsbury, which was a great delight to him. He persuaded her to sit in his study, urging, that it was so quiet, and that she would enjoy the large fire he always kept up. It would have been hard to say, whether he most delighted in paying, or his aged parent in receiving, all the little attentions a fond filial affection could suggest. He thus alludes to it in a letter to her. "It was a happy winter to me, in the midst of my occupations, to have my study graced with the presence of my dearest mother, whose very

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quietness enabled me to pursue my work, while her love cheered me in it."

The summer of 1821 was one of almost incessant journeying. "How transient and interrupted," he wrote to his mother, "are all our highest joys. I trust I do begin to feel more what a stranger and pilgrim the Christian is in this world. If any one should feel this, I am sure I should. During the last summer I have hardly ever continued more than a week in one place, and often not more than a day or two. But I feel it a blessing and a privilege, to labour in promoting the kingdom of Christ, and the salvation of perishing millions." The sermon list for this year records one hundred and twenty-eight sermons, and these, not including sermons delivered in London churches, were preached in fifty-four different towns and villages. The concluding motto this year is, "*They shall go from strength to strength.*"

In February 1822 he had nearly carried through the press his third treatise, on the Lord's Supper. "I have worked hard," he wrote to his mother, "to get it through, before I set off on my journeying. I trust that you will pray that this too may have the Divine blessing. The testimonies which I have received of good done by the others, do, I trust, fill my heart with gratitude. Mr. Wilberforce told me only the other day, that the 'Treatise on Prayer' had been a special comfort to his dying daughter, particularly the chapter on the Intercession of Christ."

The 'Treatise on the Lord's Supper,' especially the abridged edition, entitled 'A Companion to the Communion,' has been one of the most useful and widely-circulated of Mr. Bickersteth's works. Communion sea-

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sons had been so blessed to his own soul, and he had been in the habit of so carefully preparing for them, that he was eminently qualified to guide the devotions of others. Several of the meditations are extracts from reflections in his private journal.

On his birth-day, March 19, 1822, he thus gratefully retraces the course of God's goodness.

"By the mercy of God I am now thirty-six years of age: so long His forbearance and goodness has spared me and blessed me. How can I sufficiently magnify His great name!

"It much struck my mind to think, in how many various ways God has given me the desires of my heart. I wished for a pious and suitable Christian wife; the Lord heard my prayers, and gave me my beloved Sarah, with whom I have lived in peace and happiness now nearly ten years. I longed to serve God in the ministry; He delayed to hear for nearly six years, and then opened a door for me, in a way, and with an ease and rapidity, far beyond my highest hopes. I desired to be useful in the work of Missions; He heard my prayers, privileged me to go to heathen lands, and brought me back, and has made me instrumental in promoting this great work. I desired religious knowledge; He has given me an adequate supply of books, and means to increase them as I need. I wished to be useful in the way of publication to others; He has so prospered me that He has enabled me to publish three books, (on the Scriptures, Prayer, and the Lord's Supper), the two first of which have already had a most extensive circulation, even to many tens of thousands. I wished to be specially connected with young men preparing for the missionary work; and I

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have now in my house eight valuable young men preparing to serve God in the heathen world.

"O Lord, truly thou hast done all this, and more than this. After nearly eight years' marriage, thou gavest me my dear little child. Surely in these things I have seen that thou art a faithful God, hearing and answering prayer. O let me praise thee for ever and ever!

"I see the same mercy of God in the trials and afflictions which it has pleased Him to send. Truly I can say of them all, 'Our light affliction which is but for a moment;' so gently has God dealt with me! My occasional indisposition, the weakness of my wife's health, the burden of the Society, the occasional trials and crosses in carrying on its work,—every one of these things are far less than I deserve. In the last year, indeed, I have lost my beloved father, and my wife has lost her mother; but then we have hope in their death, and we believe that they are now with our Saviour. So that surveying all the way God leads me, I must from the very heart confess, 'Surely goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life!'

"But while I have every reason to admire God's mercies, and justify His ways, ah! what reason have I to condemn myself! I have not made a suitable return to Him, for that grace and mercy which I have received from Him. It is only as I come, day by day, as a poor sinful creature, to Christ Jesus, for free justification and salvation through Him alone, that I obtain peace and hope, comfort and joy. O let that grace which bringeth salvation, teach me 'to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.'"

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Mr. Bickersteth's letters frequently allude to the deepening interest of the May anniversaries.

London, May 8, 1822.

My dearest Mother, Sister, and Brother,

I must include you all, and then I shall get from some of you, letter for letter.

We had, as usual, delightful meetings in the past week. I think more piety, and more talent, and more zeal, seem brought together at our meeting every year. To God be praise.

I hope to see you all on Thursday, June 6, and to be a day or two at Liverpool. I should be glad to stay longer; but I am not master of my own time, as you know. It is all, I trust, engaged for Him whom we desire to love and serve above every thing else.

I do trust God is preparing you, dear Cooper, for the work of the ministry; and in doing so, you need not doubt, but that He will have a work for you to do. When the time comes, I doubt not but that your way will be made plain. You will perhaps have seen, that the "Treatise on the Lord's Supper," has got to another edition already. It was more than I expected so early. May the Divine blessing follow it; with that only can it do any good. The seventh edition of the "Treatise on Prayer," is gone to the press.

O may we all work while it is day. I am sure we ought to love and serve Him who has rescued us from the gulph of misery, to which our many sins would have led us.

Ever most affectionately yours,

E. Bickersteth.

In the month of May and June, he had to take a long journey in Yorkshire and Lancashire, which detained him six weeks from home. This was a great trial of faith, for Mrs. Bickersteth was in a very delicate state of health, and was expecting the birth of an infant in the

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month of June. "I never," he wrote on this journey, "left you with greater reluctance to the flesh, but I trust the good and gracious Lord, whom we serve, disposed both our minds cheerfully to give up each other for a season, that His kingdom may be promoted. The changing scenes which I pass through, relieve me indeed of something of those trying feelings, which otherwise might cling about me, and distress me, so that I am well disposed to think yours is the greater sacrifice, but thinking so, makes me feel it the more. . . . Yet, may there not be a temptation in all this?—too much resting in the creature—too much losing sight of Him who can never leave us nor forsake us. O let God our Saviour be our chief portion; let communion with Him be constantly maintained; let us delight ourselves in the Lord, and all His unsearchable riches, as secured to us in the gospel; and while we enjoy the creature more than ever, as the gift of His love, the loss of earthly comforts will not depress or harass us, but only lead us to the fountain-head."

In this case he again found the path of duty, to be that of safety and happiness. June 17th, this entry is found in his journal:

"I have again to record the loving-kindness of my heavenly Father, in the gift of another daughter. O how shall I sufficiently bless His holy name! Many were the mercies connected with the birth of this child.

"I had been enabled to plan and execute a very long and important journey for the Society. . . I had returned from my journey hardly three days. I was back in time, and the cause I serve is unreproached . . . I feel fully as thankful for a daughter as for a son; looking, I trust, simply at the one great point—another immortal spirit."

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Among other lessons he records these:

"God passes by much iniquity, transgression, and sin; or I should have been punished instead of helped.

"Now there is another tie to earth. O let my soul be set on heaven."

He named this child after his sister in Ceylon, "because," as he told his mother, "it was the most missionary name in his family." Early in July, he was again called on to travel for the society. July 19th he wrote from Derby:

MY DEAR WIFE,

We have had good meetings since I last wrote. I find that God never fails to furnish me for the occasion, when I go forth in a simple dependance on His strength; and I believe that His people every where receive favourably, the accounts of our Society, and have a growing interest in it.

Our meeting last night at Staunton was remarkable. The evening had been very unfavourable, and the place of meeting is a village, nine or ten miles from any large town. The people, however, came in covered carts, large waggons, and gigs, from all quarters. It was very interesting to see the waggons with chairs, and six or eight umbrellas dripping wet, and carts and gigs in different parts of the village; and then to go to the room where we met, and find, as we did, several hundred people gathered together. They seem to thirst after missionary intelligence, and to be much interested in the progress of this blessed work.

Hitherto the Lord hath helped us. I have three more sermons, and three more meetings, and then I hope to travel homewards. I have attended nine meetings already.

May the Lord bless you, my love, and my dear children, and abundantly supply to you the absence of a husband and father.

Ever most affectionately your faithful husband,

E. BICKERSTETH.

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His affectionate spirit greatly delighted in the society of the young men, who were preparing under his roof for their missionary labours. Frequent allusions are made to them in his letters.

"Half of our African band of missionaries have left us, and the other half will go in ten days; and Deininger goes to the Mediterranean the end of the month. Our house is a complete caravansera. I need much grace for the very responsible and important duties to which the Lord calls me. . . .

"Only Mr. Deininger is now left with us, of all you saw here, and he goes on Wednesday; we shall soon have another troop of these zealous soldiers of Christ, to whom our hearts get very closely united, when they stay any time with us."

The winter months were almost his only season of unbroken quiet. Though his days were spent in the Missionary House, he had leisure in the morning and evening to pursue his studies; and had generally some publication in hand. In 1823, "Remarks on the Prophephecies," and the "Christian Hearer," occupied his attention. He alludes in the following letter, to the services out of which the latter work arose.

MY DEAR MOTHER,

. . . We have much enjoyed the quiet of home during this winter, and rather dread the separation which the summer journeying may occasion. But we need not have an anxious thought about the future; if we can delight ourselves in God, and see Him as our Father, he will order all well. I desire to trust Him just as my little B ——, trusts me and her Mamma.

I am going on with my sermons "On Hearing the Word;" and am now just commencing the parable of the sower. I pray God to

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make them useful, first to my own congregation. It is increasing both in number and apparent seriousness; but we can little tell in London, the true character of our congregations.

I have been increasing my books lately, and find a great comfort and benefit in a good selection of books; but after all, nothing is so edifying, and devotional, and exciting, as the plain Bible with prayer. Nor is any book besides so plain and instructive, and calculated to enlarge the mind and comfort the heart. I feel this the result of experience more and more, and trust I do find at times the precious word of God to be sweeter than honey or the honeycomb. It is a comfort to me also to think, that all I hold most dear on earth are deriving refreshment from the same living fountain, and that my beloved mother is daily opening, and searching, and enjoying that same blessed volume.

London, April 3.

I have been driven, in consequence of the sentiments of some of our Jewish friends, to write a Tract, which I think of publishing, entitled "Practical Remarks on the Prophecies, with reference to efforts to spread the gospel, and to personal edification." My hope is to unite and edify; but I cannot get time now to finish it for the press.

London, May 3, 1823.

MY DEAR MOTHER,

I write now amid a mass of work, which I hardly know how to move on with; and though I will not break my engagement of writing monthly, I know that you will excuse a very hurried letter. It would take a long time to tell you where I have been the last month. I will just mention Portsea and Norwich. I had not been at Portsea, since I was detained there three weeks, going to Africa. It was a most interesting visit to me, and filled my heart with gratitude. I found that my labours there, had indeed, in several instances, been owned and blessed of God. To Him be all glory.

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To Norwich I went for a few hours, just to visit S——'s dying brother, and bring her home. I was very glad I went.

One of my own congregation, Miss F——, is dying in the most tranquil and joyful state I ever witnessed. These things call for great thankfulness; and I record them to show the goodness of the Lord. I have not a higher joy than to see spiritual good done, by any of my occupations.

I am now on the eve of my long northern journey, beginning next Friday at Ashbourne, and ending the 20th of June.

S——, and our dear children are well, and we are surrouuded with mercies.

Ever most affectionately yours,

E. BICKERSTETH.

Ferrybridge, May 29, 1823.

MY DEAREST WIFE,

I am writing this near Pontefract, just after receiving your gratifying letter, giving me such a cheering account of yourself and our dear children. To God be all praise. I, too, since I wrote last, have been carried comfortably through our Knaresboro', York, and Pontefract meetings; and blessed, I trust, as usual, in the work to which God has called me. To his name be all praise and glory, again and again.

Our York meeting was a most remarkable one, more like Bristol than anything we have yet had: the large Assembly-room filled, about thirty clergymen present, and a zeal manifested truly edifying. I was almost overcome by the whole scene, and having but one day to spend among such a growing number of pious and attached friends, at the close of it I was greatly exhausted; but the Lord renews my strength from day to day. I feel that He is employing me in a great and blessed cause, and I rejoice to labour for Him.

What a blessing and comfort are our dear children to you. God seems in them to be recompensing us for giving up each other for

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Him. One thing I am sure enough, that we can never give up any thing for Him, without a double blessing in return.*

Ever yours,

E. BICKERSTETH.

This year his family was increased, not only by the birth of another daughter in August, but by the urgent request of his dying brother-in-law, that his two orphan girls might be admitted into his family. These dear children were with him above seven years, and they shared his solicitude equally with his own. They both died young, resting in simple faith on Jesus.

Though he was so much separated from his children, he was tenderly and anxiously alive to their spiritual welfare, and careful, when at home, to redeem time for their instruction. Some of the earliest religious lessons his eldest daughter can remember are those her father used regularly to give her, while he was dressing in the morning. This year, as she began to read a little, he found time, amidst his hurried journeys, to print little letters, for her, at the close of those addressed to her mother. This practice was continued for many years. "It has occurred to me," he wrote, in 1829, to his wife, "that possibly it may please God to own and bless the little short letters to my children, I therefore keep up the practice. What a mercy will it be if we see our dear children early seeking the Saviour!" His children have

* Much as he loved his children, he was jealous of their becoming idols to their parents. "O my love," he wrote to his wife, "let not our sweet babes usurp the Lord's place in your heart, but only be means of fixing Him more firmly on that which ever ought to be His throne. Our children do, I trust, not only by analogy show us his love, but by grace, lead us to more gratitude to Him, and a richer and higher sense of His loving-kindness towards us.

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many of these little strips of paper, as mementos of a father's early love. Two or three will serve as specimens of his simple style of teaching.

Liverpool, June 28, 1824.

MY DEAR CHILDREN,

This is written from a very large town. Many ships come to it, and many sail from it to all parts of the world. I should like to sail in one of them, directly to Hastings, to see mamma and all my little girls; but we must not always do what we like, but must always do what God calls us to do.

Your dear papa and uncle,

E. BICKERSTETH.

Huddersfield, June 27, 1826.

MY DEAREST CHILDREN,

As I am coming, I write to you all four. How glad I shall be to find all good children. A good child is one sorry for having ever done wrong; trusting only in Jesus Christ; loving God above all; obedient to papa and mamma; and seeking to do good to every body. May God give you his Holy Spirit to make you all good.

From your affectionate father,

E. BICKERSTETH.

Another plan which he commenced early was to have all his little ones in his study for a few minutes before breakfast; when with one on his knee—a privilege so prized that that seat was taken by turns—he would give some simple scriptural lesson, and then, making them kneel around him, would seek God's blessing for them. His own plans were however so broken by his frequent absence, that he felt he must mainly trust their early

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training to their mother's care; and his letters to her contain frequent allusions to the principles on which he was anxious that training should be conducted.

Hull, May 24, 1823.

I was delighted to hear of my dear children's happiness. O may the God of all grace give them early His grace, and may you have special wisdom bestowed upon you to train them up for God. I see clearly the formation of their minds will very much depend on you, my dearest S——, and I do earnestly pray that you may be enabled to fulfil this all-important duty to the glory of God and their best and eternal welfare, so that they may ever thank God that they had a Christian mother, who with watchful care restrained what was evil, corrected what was wrong, and instilled day by day into their minds the fear of God, and the truths of his ever-blessed and glorious Gospel.

It appears to me that order and regularity in the plan of education will be one main thing. But let us, above all, pray for grace to act upon our Saviour's maxim, and, in preference to all earthly distinctions and accomplishments and prospects, to seek first for our children the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

In October he was called upon to take a long journey in Ireland. From Bandon he wrote thus:—

Bandon, October 10, 1823.

My beloved Wife,

I am now, I believe, at the most distant part of my journey from you, and my letter will travel above 500 miles before it reaches London. I shall have to journey, according to the present plan, about 800 miles before I reach you. O how cheerless would this be, were it not for the revelation of the gracious Providence, constant presence, watchful care, and unceasing love of God our Saviour.

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But with this revelation, all is peaceful and happy. My God is here; my God is with you. He that alone is able to bless, in one vast Omnipresence, sees you and me and all intervening and surrounding circumstances, places, and persons. I pray to Him for you. That moment He can give you the blessing, and unworthy as we are, He will do so, because we believe in Jesus.

I wrote to you last from Cappoquin. I left there on Wednesday morning, and proceeded with Peter Roe to Youghal, a large seaport town. On my way I looked into an Irish cabin. They live like the Africans, only with a little more clothing, though without shoes or stockings, bonnets or hats. Eight children, and three or four grown-up persons, lived in the one miserable mud-hut, without windows, and squatting on the mud-floor. It was very affecting to see human beings living in such a state, but still more so to consider their mental and moral darkness.

Yesterday I left Youghal for Cork. I went from the coach to the meeting, spoke an hour and a quarter, and had immediately to go to another coach for Bandon: so that I was only about three hours in Cork, two of which were spent in the meeting. We got to Bandon about half-past seven, and I came up to the clergyman, Mr. Newman, who received me with true Irish hospitality, and a large party assembled to hear of Africa, and to receive Christian edification. God strengthens me for my work, and I had infinitely rather labour hard for Him than be idle.

Ever affectionately thine,

E. BICKERSTETH.

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CHAPTER XIV.

CONTINUED LABOURS IN THE MISSIONARY WORK.

A. D. 1822.

MR. BICKERSTETH continued to feel a most lively interest in the mission which he had personally inspected in Africa. The peculiar outpouring of God's Spirit vouchsafed to the labours of Mr. Johnson and Mr. Düring, after he left, made this mission also the peculiar glory and delight of the Society. When Mr. Johnson, with the godly jealousy of an eminent Christian, expressed his fears, lest in sending home accounts of the number of his communicants, he should seem to boast, Mr. Bickersteth wrote thus to encourage him.

Church Missionary House, June 29, 1822.

You need not hesitate about sending us the number of your communicants, though your godly jealousy as to the snare this might be, through the devices of our great enemy, was very pleasing to us. It is for the glory of God and his Gospel, and the encouragement of his servants, in persevering in a difficult and self-denying work, that it is needful to show what God has done.

The Committee hope to send you six, eight, or ten more labourers this autumn; we keep them back on account of the rains. They will, as far as we can judge, be men of God, and full of the Holy Ghost.

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The fears you express of your danger will, through the grace of Christ, be a means of keeping you from falling. God has greatly honoured you, but you feel that all comes from Him; and the more we receive from Him, the more we owe to Him. It is our hope and prayer that what has been done, may be but the beginning of far greater things, and that the Gospel may break forth among the nations around you, to the praise and glory of God. Fix your eye on what is undone, and what God has promised to do.

The love, harmony, and social spirit manifested among the negroes, with the spirit of piety at the subscription-dinner was very pleasing to us. Yet we confess to you, that we look at large companies, meeting together in that way, with some degree of fear, lest Satan should lead the heathen from the simplicity which is in Christ Jesus: and yet we see, on the other hand, how desirable it is to have suitable occasions for manifesting the spirit of love which prevails among them. May the Lord, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom, ever give you that wisdom which is profitable to direct, and enable you to build up your people in their most holy faith.

We desire with you to praise and bless God for the liberal contributions raised in the colony, and especially among the converted negroes. It has much stirred up Christians in our own country, and many calculations have been made to show what large sums would be raised in England, if Englishmen did but equal what the liberated negroes are doing. Thus we must stir up each other to love and good works.

And now we commend you again to our gracious God. May He ever have you in His holy keeping, and make you yet more abundantly blessed in advancing the kingdom of His dear Son.

Dark clouds of sorrow were soon to shadow the gladness which had reigned in Sierra Leone. In the summer of 1823, a malignant fever broke out in the colony, which carried off three of the Society's labourers. At the same

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time, Mr. Johnson and Mr. Flood, the second chaplain, who were returning to England for their health, died on ship-board; the same letter which acknowledged the account of the losses in Africa, conveyed back the tidings of their death.

July 15, 1823.

DEAR BROTHER DÜRING,

We received your affecting letter of April 2, 1823, and also that to Mr. Johnson, dated May 14.

We have also to add to the distressing tidings from you, the heavy loss of our beloved brother Johnson, and that of Mr. Flood, both of whom died at sea. Never before, did we in one week receive such accumulated tidings of painful bereavements. The will of the Lord be done. God forbid that we should murmur against His holy will, only may His great name be glorified and magnified.

Sarah Allen Bickersteth, (a black girl) gives us a few particulars deeply interesting to us of his last days. His negroes at Regent's Town were uppermost in his mind. He charged her with a message to us to do all we could to send a faithful minister to his people. He wished her expressly to tell David Noah to go on steadily with his duty,—"For suppose he say, because Massa die, I can do nothing; he must not say so, but pray to God, and God would help him, and then they would meet in heaven." These were some of his last words. His last intelligible words were, "I cannot live, but God calls me, and this night I go to be with Him."

Our accounts of Mr. Flood's death are very satisfactory; he died a penitent believer. You will doubtless take the first opportunity of improving this subject among his people. I preached at Wheler Chapel from 2 Cor. i. 8. It has caused much feeling and deep sympathy among our friends.

Tell all our friends, and especially the widows, we deeply sympathize with them, and would write particularly, did time permit.

Ever affectionately yours,

E. BICKERSTETH.

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The faithful and honoured Missionary to whom this was addressed was himself soon afterwards lost at sea, the vessel in which he sailed being never heard of. In July, 1824, Mr. Bickersteth wrote to comfort and strengthen David Noah the catechist, who had been left in charge of Mr. Johnson's bereaved congregation.

DEAR DAVID NOAH,

We were glad to receive your report of March 24th. The Lord Jesus keep you and strengthen you in all your trials. Remember, now He has taken from you other teachers and guides, you must look only to Him, and seek to please Him. Never mind what others may say or do, nor be led away by their neglect of Christ to follow their evil ways; but you know Jesus is a living, a faithful, a holy, and a kind Saviour. O trust in Him and follow Him. Read His word much every day, and it will nourish your soul, and strengthen you for your duties. Live in prayer. It is a time of darkness and trial, but light comes after darkness, and experience, and hope, and joy, after tribulation. See Rom. v. 1—11.

Tell the grown-up people, their friends in England are very sorry to find they do not attend evening-school. It looks like leaving the ways of Christ. Let them remember what is said Psalm lxxxix. 30—32.

E. BICKERSTETH.

Mr. Johnson's congregation, composed of recent converts from heathenism, suffered much from the loss of their pastor, and from the unsettled state of the ministry among them, great difficulty having been found in supplying fresh teachers. The following pastoral letter was sent to them by Mr. Bickersteth, through their catechist David Noah.*

* This letter is one of eighteen, written by Mr. Bickersteth on this day, copies of which have been preserved at the Church Mission House.

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September 6, 1825.

DEAR DAVID NOAH,

I write to you on the part of the Committee in much sorrow, at your heavy loss and many trials, and I wish this letter to be read to all the people of Regent's, when you get them together after receiving it.

It gives us joy to find that some of you are stedfastly serving the Lord Christ, amidst the tribulation with which it has pleased God to visit you. You find it good to be afflicted: though very grievous to the flesh, it is very profitable to the spirit, and we hope that your souls are growing in grace, that you find Christ more precious, this world more vain, sin more hateful, and heaven more endeared to you; you see yourselves to be polluted, Christ all in all, and the blessed Spirit your Guide and your Teacher. God has taken away Mr. Johnson, and Mr. Bull, and Mr. Norman, and Mr. Brooks, and the other brethren, to lead you more to depend on Jesus alone, and His holy word and blessed Spirit. He punishes you here that He may not punish you for ever hereafter; He chastises you because He loves you. We know the ways of God our Saviour; they seem hard, but they are full of love. I speak to those fathers and mothers among you who have dear children; you know how you love them, and care for them, and wept over them, and if they do wrong, still you love them; and even when you flog them, you love them still, and all you do is for their good. Now God loves His people far, very far more than you do your children. O may you know and believe the love which He has to all you who trust in the name of His Son Jesus Christ.

But there are some who have left off to do good, and who have forsaken the assembling of themselves together. To you I have to say, Ye did run well, what now hinders you? Is your death or the judgment-day less near and less certain? No, you must die; you must stand before God in judgment. Have you found any unkindness in Christ? O no, He loves His enemies, He weeps over those who do not know the things which belong to their peace. Is

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He less precious? O no! He is the pearl of great price; all things may well be counted loss for Him. What then is the reason that you have forsaken Him? O, dear brethren, you cause us, who hoped well of you, much sorrow of heart. We weep when we think of our poor scattered congregation at Regent. We think, ah! they have gone back, and the good Spirit is grieved, and the Devil triumphs, and says, So would we have it, and the wicked blaspheme the holy name of our Redeemer. And in this country, those who have hindered us in sending missionaries are ready to say, 'See how vain are your labours, we told you it was of no use to send missionaries to the blacks; if they mind a little time, they soon leave off, and it is all in vain to give your money and send missionaries to them.' And what if, through your falling back, Christians should grow weary of sending the Gospel, and your country should be left in darkness; what, I say, will you have to answer for in the great day of judgment? What will the blessed Redeemer say? will it not be, "Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity, into outer darkness, prepared for the devil and his angels?"

But we hope better things. O repent, repent, repent, of your backslidings. Read Hosea xiv. over and over again. Read Luke xv. See how ready the Lord Jesus is to receive those that come to Him. See how our heavenly Father is watching for your return, and when He sees you a long way off, He will run and fall on your neck, and kiss you, while you are confessing your sins.

O dear Christian brethren in Africa, our bowels yearn over you. Have a day of fasting and prayer. Seek the Lord very diligently. Consider your ways, and look into your own hearts. Cry mightily unto God, and so iniquity shall not be your ruin. He will have compassion on you, and love you freely, and heal all your backslidings. I, for my part, have felt so much for you, that I have longed to come and see you again, but I cannot leave home, and the many duties to which God calls me here. Be sure we think of you, and love you, and pray for you, hoping that we may at the last meet you at the Saviour's right hand.

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And will you not try to give us joy? I will tell you what will give us joy. O what joy would it give to all English Christians, who love their African brethren, to hear that you were very sorry, and deeply mourned that you had forsaken the Lord as you have done; that you looked unto Jesus whom you have pierced, and wept; that you, earnestly, with one accord, met with weeping and prayer, beseeching the Lord, the Spirit, to give you a new heart, to lead you again to Jesus, and to enable you afresh to walk in His ways; that then again the Church was crowded as in the time of Mr. Johnson, and you eagerly listened to the word of God, and constantly, on Sabbaths, and on week-days, assembled in His house, praying day and night for God to revive His work among you. And doubtless He would return, and the showers of His grace would come down upon you, and He would bless you, even more than He has yet blessed you, and we should offer louder songs of thanksgivings for His goodness to you, than have ever yet been offered up on your behalf, and should rejoice over you with joy unspeakable.

And, dear brethren, lift up your heads, and enlarge your hearts for your countrymen. We still hope that you are to be Missionaries for all the African nations from which you have come, and that God has called you to His truth, that you may convey His blessing to them. O think much of this: to live to Christ, to labour for Christ, to die for Christ, this is the highest happiness to which any human being can attain. He is worthy, for He died for us. Our prayer is, that you may have been so wonderfully spared and brought to Sierra Leone, to hear the Gospel there, and since have been so greatly tempted and afflicted, humbled, and distressed, only to fit and prepare you to spread the Gospel all over Africa. Pray, pray, pray, that God may help you to spend yourselves, and to be spent for Him. Pray that all your sorrows and temptations may be blessed to your soul's best good, and that if it be His blessed will, you may go forth, many of you, to your own country, to proclaim His salvation to hundreds and thousands now lying in darkness and the shadow of death.

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Oh, it is the travail of our Redeemer's soul, that you and your country should be saved; and what might not be done, if all that dwell in Regent were heartily devoted to Him who died for them! Think of these things, and pray over them.

Well, brethren, farewell; now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord. Be not weary in well-doing. Christ is coming to bless all who serve Him, and punish all His enemies. Let us be ready, for in such an hour as ye think not, He cometh. I am, for His sake,

Your affectionate Brother and Friend,

E. BICKERSTETH.

Let this Letter be read at each town of liberated Africans in the Colony.

The catechist, David Noah, did not fully satisfy the hopes which had been entertained of him, and in 1830, on unsatisfactory grounds discontinued his connection with the Society. Mr. Bickersteth had previously written the following letter of warning and admonition to him.

November 7th 1829.

DEAR DAVID NOAH,

We have read your Journal of your visit to the Bassa country, with mingled feelings of interest and anxiety. Had we not received an account of your intention to leave the Society at Christmas, and enter upon trading, we should have hoped that you still had at heart the highest and best interest of your own soul and the souls of your countrymen. We cannot, however, now, but deeply fear, that the great enemy has gained an advantage over you; that, as he tempted our heavenly Master, by displaying to Him the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, so has he now been tempting you, and that you have yielded to his temptation. Ah, dear David, what will it profit you, to gain the whole world, and lose your own soul? What possible comfort can you have in worldly things, gained at the cost of sacrificing your usefulness in the cause of

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Christ? Think how grieved your beloved master Johnson would have been at such an end of his hopes—think how disappointed the friends of the Society in this country will be, when they hear that David Noah has turned his back on the Mission, and is now a worldly trader—think how this must be bitterness in the end, and how grieved you yourself must be in self-recollection, at having thrown away the noblest opportunities of serving and glorifying Christ, and saving the immortal souls of your countrymen, and of encouraging the hearts, and strengthening the hands, of the devoted servants of Christ, who at so great a cost, and so many sacrifices, are labouring to give the Gospel to Africa.

Yours is not a common case; you, like the Church at Ephesus, have laboured, and have not fainted,—and now will you leave your first love? O read over the Epistle to the angel of the Church at Ephesus, Rev. ii. 1—7; it seems exactly to meet your case. Pray over this portion of God's word, ask of the Saviour his blessed Spirit, to impress it on your heart, and perhaps He may bring you back to fresh zeal and devotedness to His cause, and we may have more joy in you, and over you, than ever.

I write freely and fully to you, for I long for your hearty return to Christ and His service. I write so, not because I do not love you, but because I do love you, and entertain the sincere hope that you will consider these things, and humble yourself before God, and He will lift you up and restore you.

Dear David, let us be comforted in seeing you giving yourself heartily, and unreservedly, to the service of Christ.

In 1824 Mr. Pratt withdrew from the Secretaryship of the Society, and its direction was thereby thrown more on Mr. Bickersteth. "I am called," he wrote, "to increasing responsibility and labours, especially in what may be called the under-ground work,—the Committee-work of our Society. I more than ever need your prayers, that I may fulfil the very important duties

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of the station in which God has placed me." It is not easy to estimate, either the importance or the difficulty of this under-ground work; the cheering fruits of it come before the public, but many of the trying perplexities of its details are known only to those on whom the constant direction of its business depends. As early as the year 1818, when the operations of the Church Missionary Society were far less extended, Mr. Pratt could write thus of the varied scenes in which it laboured. "On the review of these Missions, it will be seen that the Society has to deal with man in almost every stage of civilization, from the noble, but uncultivated New Zealander, upward through the more civilized African, and the still more refined Hindoo, to the acute and half-enlightened Mahommedan, and the different gradations in which Christianity is enjoyed by the Abyssinian, the Syrian, and the Greek Churches. These varied shades of light and civilization, require all the varied means and instruments which the Society is now calling into action, from the Blacksmith, the Ropemaker, the Boat-builder, and the Farmer, who meet the first necessities of the New Zealander, up through the Schoolmaster who follows his fugitive children into the woods, and the Reader who collects the more lettered Hindoos around him in the Bazaar, to the Catechist who instils principles into inquiring minds, and the Missionary who preaches the glad tidings of salvation. All are needed, and all are occupying an important post, in that great work which it pleases God to assign to our various Institutions."

A scheme so complex necessarily involved many difficulties and anxieties. It was eminently a work of faith. The Committee had a body of Missionary labourers to

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provide for, scattered over all parts of the earth, and for the performance of the engagements they had made with them they were entirely dependent on an uncertain income derived from voluntary benevolence. On one occasion they had only in hand funds for one month's expenditure, but though they passed through anxious seasons, God enabled them to trust in Him, and then rewarded their faith by the progressive increase of the Society's income and usefulness. In the disbursement of the funds collected, it was on the one hand a solemn duty to allow no waste in a sacred treasury, filled in part from the savings of the pious poor; but, on the other, it was an equally solemn trust, to avoid any such ill-judged parsimony as might increase the trials, or injure the health of a faithful labourer, who had given up all for Christ. Each station required separate consideration,—that which amply sufficed for the Missionary in one land, hardly affording the common necessaries of life in another; while, in some cases, needful supplies had to be sent direct from home. The Missionary expenditure of each station required watchful care, and the very success of the labourer involved heavy expences in Missionary Buildings, Schools, Printing-presses, &c. The attention of each labourer was necessarily most fixed on his own immediate sphere, and he was liable to urge its claims on a scale that might cramp the operations of other missions. It was for the Committee to decide, where hope and zeal might be allowed to press forward, and where prudence was bound to restrain their course. Where it was possible to obtain local European superintendance, the Parent Committee were alive to its importance. In India they acted almost entirely through the valuable corresponding Committees

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established in the different Presidencies. Where Colonial Bishops were appointed, they were anxious that their Missionaries should show a willingness to submit to their authority, if it did not interfere with the still higher principle of the Society's allegiance to evangelical truth. Difficult social and ecclesiastical questions, at times, much exercised the minds of the Committee. Other delicate questions arose, when the heathen were brought within the fold of Christ, and were called on to relinquish their former practices of polygamy, caste, &c. For many years it was the habit of the Secretaries of some of the chief Missionary Societies, the Church Missionary, the London, the Wesleyan, to meet at one another's offices. They then mutually imparted the result of their experience, in the conduct of their Missions, in the selection and training of Missionary Candidates, and the course to be pursued with heathen converts. They discussed the methods of avoiding collision at home, or any matter which might excite jealousy or discontent with their own Society in the minds of their Missionaries abroad. They were all engaged in one great work ; and men like Mr. Pratt and Mr. Bickersteth felt that the success of their dissenting brethren was that of the common cause of Christ, and rejoiced if their experience could help it forward, or if they could gain from them any lessons of practical wisdom.

It was seldom that the Society were deceived in the character of their labourers. They made it their main object to send out men of God, who sincerely desired the salvation of the heathen ; but even amongst such there were many shades and degrees of devotedness, many human frailties. Missionaries are men of like passions with ourselves, and

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amidst the darkness and vice of heathenism, sundered from Christian communion, they are exposed to far fiercer temptations. It was the special desire of the Committee to encourage that close and free correspondence with the Society at home, which might best supply the lack of Christian intercourse. Errors in judgment might thus be corrected, differences with fellow-labourers adjusted, besetting temptations tenderly pointed out, encouragement given in hours of weakness, brotherly warning in exciting moments of success. This interesting work required much knowledge of human character. The humble settler, whose missionary zeal made him willing to follow his mechanical calling amidst the perils of savage life in New Zealand, was exposed to very different temptations, and required very different counsel, from the learned brother, engaged in translations from ancient languages on the shores of the Mediterranean. Mr. Bickersteth's deep religious experience, and peculiarly tender spirit, adapted him in no common degree for a work which might well be termed a spiritual episcopate,—a charge to watch over the distant pastors, to whom the flock amongst the heathen was committed. From the first he had taken a part in this work as far as his missionary journeys allowed; during the latter years of his connection with the Society it was his special province. A few letters, from copies preserved in the Church Missionary House, will be given, as specimens of the combined judgment and tenderness with which he fulfilled it.

The following was written to one with whom he had been personally acquainted in Africa, and whom he specially esteemed for his works' sake, while he deemed

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it a duty to guard him against a spiritual temptation to which he saw him exposed.

October 25th, 1824.

DEAR BROTHER ——,

Knowing you personally, and sympathizing in your many trials, I wish to write to you a private letter on one or two things, in your later communications, which have grieved us.

We would make all those allowances, that the state of health, in which you have been, so plainly calls for. When the body is suffering under disease, and the mind is bowed down and harassed by many cares and trials, there is a great temptation to yield to our natural corruptions and infirmities. I have felt this painfully myself, and doubt not you have experienced the same thing.

But making every allowance of this kind, we have been distressed by the hard and unkind remarks, respecting the labours of your brethren, and the slight thrown upon their work. . .

Without entering into the consideration, how far the infirmities and failings of your departed brethren may have given occasion for your disparaging expressions of them and their labours;—allow me, dear brother, in Christian love and friendship, to say, that your statements give strong evidence, that in things connected with them and their labours, your mind is under a prevailing temptation to hard and severe, not to say unjust views. I will not take out and copy the expressions which call upon me to write thus, but rather exhort you, as a brother beloved, to cultivate a greater spirit of love, that love which covereth all things, that love which thinketh no evil, that love which rejoiceth in the truth.

Soon you, and ——, and ——, and I, as we trust, shall meet together before our Saviour, and rejoice with Him through eternity. Now let nothing be said or done, that shall hinder our joy in Him, and in each other.

I would write at greater length, but am pressed for time, and need not. You know I esteem you highly, and love you heartily,

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and I am sure you will believe that this is written in love, and will take it in good part. From

Ever affectionately yours,

E. BICKERSTETH.

The following letter, written at a later period to a schoolmaster in the West Indies, who had neglected his duties, is another instance of kind and faithful reproof.

August 5th, 1829.

DEAR MR. M——,

We have duly received your letters down to March 28th, and thank you for the accounts you have given us of your proceedings.

It gave us great pleasure to hear that your health had been good, and that you had so speedily recovered from the Cholera Morbus, with which you had been attacked.

We wish we could write with equal satisfaction respecting your schools. (Complaints are then made with reference to the school).

We know the debilitating effect of tropical climates, but we also know what devoted men, fully alive to their responsible and important office, have done in Jamaica itself; and we would therefore earnestly charge you to be fully alive to your important duties; to be not backward in your work, but "fervent in spirit, serving the the Lord." The Master we serve justly claims a zealous, patient, steady, persevering service from us. (The disapprobation of the Committee is then expressed). Having now discharged a painful duty, we can only assure you of our fervent prayers, that grace may be abundantly given to you for all your work. If you live near to the Saviour, and partake of His fulness, you will long to impart the tidings of His love to others, and in doing this, will yourself be enlivened and refreshed. The more you do for others, the more you will be enabled to do, and you will find the work its own reward, and the joy of the Lord your strength. Think, dear brother, how our hearts are discouraged, and our hands weakened, when our beloved fellow-labourers among the heathen faint in the way. Let

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us be comforted and strengthened, by seeing and hearing that our God is quickening you to entire devotedness in His work.

Affectionately yours,

E. BICKERSTETH.

The following letter was written to encourage his brother-in-law Mr. Mayor, and his fellow-labourer Mr. Ward, in their work in Ceylon.

Church Missionary House, July 19, 1824.

DEAR BROTHERS MAYOR AND WARD.

We anticipate an approaching period of much blessing on your work, because the Lord has so completely shown you your own helplessness and insufficiency, and is leading you daily to look more simply to His grace and sufficiency. He will never disappoint those who trust in Him. How beautiful in this view is the prayer of Asa, and how encouraging the result of that prayer! 'Help us, O Lord our God, for we trust in Thee, and in Thy name we go against this multitude.'

We shall be anxious to know the result of the high-priest's visit; though we have learned, while we avail ourselves of every opening, not to be too sanguine in our expectations of those things which promise fairest at the outset. The Lord may not be in the tempest, the earthquake, or the fire, and may manifest Himself after all in the still small voice. But we are sure that He will not fail them that seek Him.

We rejoice to see your zealous exertions in preaching the word. It is your grand weapon against the enemy. May you be strengthened to wield it to the utmost, and find it mighty through God to the pulling down of every strong-hold of Satan. It will, and must be so. You probably somewhat under-rate education, but you do not over-rate preaching to the adults, and we pray God that there may be such a manifest blessing on your labours in this respect, as may be a great encouragement to your missionary brethren everywhere to tread more fully in your steps.

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You perhaps do not, if we may judge from the details you send us, come soon enough in your discourses to the Son of God becoming man and dying for sinners—the cross of Christ—the Lord Jesus Christ crucified—though you always lead to this and end with this. May the Lord the Spirit, ever taking of the things of Christ and showing them to us, lead us to preach Him in all His fulness, as the Saviour, the portion, the hope, the life, the joy, and the all in all, of fallen sinners.

Go on, dear brethren, in the strength of the Lord. We rejoice in your labours, and sympathize with you in your sorrows. You are our joy and comfort, and may the Divine Spirit be poured out more and more upon you and your work, and the Lord Jesus be constantly magnified in you.

With love to our sisters Mayor and Ward.

E. BICKERSTETH.

Mr. Bickersteth was very anxious to impress on his missionary brethren the importance of training native teachers. The following letter respecting a native convert was written to Mr. Ward, Jan. 21, 1826.

We shall be glad to hear that Bartimeus turns out well. When we bear in mind the power of natural corruption in all, we are not surprized at its breaking forth in him in the way you mention, without impeaching the sincerity of his profession. Baptism is a confirming as well as an initiatory ordinance, and should not be too long delayed.

The difficulty of sending labourers from this country is very great, and our great hope of success is in those whom God shall raise up around you. Many of these will grievously disappoint you, many will turn out unprofitable; but if the Lord touch the heart and quicken the spirit of one here and there, and he rise up and labour for Christ, the leaven must spread till the whole be leavened.

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If there is one thing more frequently reiterated than another in these letters to missionary brethren, it is the charge to preach Christ fully and constantly. It was after this manner he urged his earnest exhortations,—"Above all, dear brethren, let Christ be prominent in all your ministry, your life, and your labours: as He is exalted, there is a blessing:—'I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me.' Fail not then constantly to proclaim the Saviour in His glorious person, in all His offices, in His free and full redemption, in His complete salvation, in the work of His Spirit, and in the glory which He has promised. What a Saviour we have! What a treasure is entrusted to us! Though we daily feel that the treasure is contained in an earthen vessel, yet O what a privilege it is to be entrusted with it, and to have to make it known!"

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CHAPTER XV.

CONTINUED LABOURS FOR THE SOCIETY—VISIT TO THE CONTINENT.

A. D. 1824—1827.

THOUGH Mr. Bickersteth's presence was now more needed in the Committee in London, and the increasing claims of his large family made him anxious to be less absent from home, his services were so urgently required by the various Associations, that he still had much of a pilgrim life. In the years 1824 and 1825 his journeys were scarcely diminished. His sermon-list still tells of sermons preached in each of these two years, in nearly fifty different towns and villages. In 1824 it concludes with the motto, "Christ increasingly precious, all my hope!" and in 1825, with the words, "Faint, yet pursuing."

Mr. Bickersteth felt much the burden which his frequent absence devolved on his beloved wife, and was anxious in his letters to lead her to that which he knew was the only true support in every little domestic difficulty.

Tamworth, August 19th, 1824.

One humbling reflection comes across my mind: how very little I adequately pursue the spiritual welfare of yourself and my little ones. O that we could attain by the power of the Holy Ghost, a more

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close walking with God in all our domestic concerns. We shall never be fully blessed as a family, till this be attained. I have thought much of the burden which you have upon you in so large a family. What is the true relief? There is but one,—casting all care upon Him that careth for you. Whatever be the trial, there leave it all—if your husband departs from you, Jesus does not—if servants are insubordinate, still Jesus is gracious—if the children are in trouble, Jesus is still present to help. The very design of all your occupations is to bring you to Him, and if this be not accomplished, or if this be hindered by them, all these occupations are worse than unprofitable; they are keeping you from true happiness here, and for ever; but if this be, as it may be, the blessed issue of them, through the gracious energy of the Holy Ghost, all your present engagements, and difficulties, and sorrows, will quicken your soul in the divine life, endear the Saviour, prepare you for His presence, and make you a still larger spiritual blessing to your husband, children, and whole family. God in mercy grant me grace to attend to this, as well as my dear wife. I am grieved and burdened, at this time, at the state of our servants, and pray God that you may have grace so to act towards them, as may be most for His glory, and their own real good.

I think much of my little tribe, and of the cares which devolve upon you with them. May your greatest care and concern be about their *minds*, and about their *souls*, and not about their appearance, and their bodies. Their minds will mark their characters all through life, their souls will live for ever; and in both views, how much depends on their mother! From the time of Augustine, who owed so much to his pious mother Monica, to the present day, how much has the Church of God been indebted to pious mothers, to their prayers, their watchfulness, their earnestness, their unceasing efforts to promote the vital godliness of their children. We have hardly conversed enough on this all-important subject when together, and I pray God we may both be more alive to it hereafter.

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In October he thus described to his mother the press of work which rested on him.

Islington, October 4th.

MY BELOVED MOTHER,

I have been so tossed about, and occupied almost day and night, that I have been completely prevented writing. I can now write but a very hurried letter, having all sorts of occupation upon me. We are sending out to-day seven fresh labourers to West Africa. I have before me long letters I have not even read, and arrangements to make of a vast number of important proceedings. I only mention this, to excuse my sending such a letter as I can, in the midst of this confusion—but to-morrow is not likely to be less busy. . . . Poor R—— seems to be occupied too above measure. The greatest evil is, not that the body suffers, but that the soul is in special danger; though, if we be in the path of duty, we may hope for special grace. . . . With kindest love, believe me,

Your ever affectionate Son,

E. BICKERSTETH.

A seminary, which had been preparing for some time for the training of missionary candidates, was opened in the beginning of 1825. Mr. Bickersteth felt that the charge of this Institution would be quite incompatible with the other duties of his secretaryship; yet he regretted parting with his missionary inmates. "For my part," he wrote, "I shall greatly regret losing the comfort of having these excellent men under my roof. I believe that they have brought a blessing with them into my family, but I rejoice in having had them, and believe that they are likely now to be more effectively trained for their arduous labours." The opening of the Seminary is thus described in a letter to his mother: "The new In-

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stitution was opened yesterday by a solemn and religious meeting held at the house. It was a most impressive occasion, and the whole proceedings were calculated, I trust, to leave a lasting blessing. Mr. Pearson (the new master) and I addressed the missionaries at some length. Our addresses are to be printed. Mr. Pratt, Mr. Basil Woodd, and Mr. Stewart prayed with them, and I trust we found the presence and blessing of God with us of a truth.

"I feel much the loss of the missionary students; it was such a scene of usefulness to have them in my house, and they were all of such a holy and heavenly temper, that we never had any thing but comfort with them. They spoke, with the greatest feeling, of the good they had received, and our parting was a sorrowful day to us all. May all be sanctified for good."

In January 1825, Mr. Bickersteth rejoiced over the birth of the only son whom it pleased God to spare to him.

During this winter he devoted all his leisure time to the "Christian Hearer." In March, he wrote to his mother —"I fear that the 'Christian Hearer,' though almost finished as to the manuscript, and revised by my brother John, and now revising by Mr. Budd, will hardly be out this spring. My first duty is to the Society, and all must give way to that, because it is the work to which my Saviour especially calls me."

His works had so rapid a sale, that they afforded him real assistance in the support of his family. "In this gracious way, God," he wrote, "has compensated the sacrifices which I made on leaving the law, and provides for my dear family. How good is the Lord; He

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never fails them that seek Him, though they often (I am sure at least, it is my case) fail of duly seeking Him."

The summer brought the usual train of missionary journeys. The following letters were written to his wife and mother.

Gloucester, March 21st, 1825.

MY BELOVED WIFE,

I seize an early opportunity of writing to you. Both you and the dear children, are much on my mind, and that in the best moments. When I leave you, and travel alone, I seem to have time for meditation on the state of my wife and family, and can lift up many a secret prayer for your spiritual welfare, which, amid the distractions of my heavy occupations when at home, I am unable to do. What I long most of all for, and most earnestly beseech God in your behalf is, to see the power of Christ manifested, in raising you and our little ones to a life of devotion to Him. You are full of cares about their temporal concerns, and needful it is you should care for them; now I am anxious to increase your care for their spiritual concerns, in the assured hope that it will lighten and lessen all your other care. I want, above all things, (and yet I feel that I am far too careless and unconcerned about it,) that we should so act towards our dear children, as will give us most joy in that swiftly-approaching day, when we shall stand before Christ at His judgment. O may we then have the full comfort of presenting our children as His, and saying, "Behold I, and the children which Thou hast given me."

My meditations on Saturday, my birth-day, as I journeyed alone in the chaise at night from Gloucester to Uley, (fifteen miles off,) were peculiarly refreshing to me, and I determined to look for more grace, to live more wholly to Him who died for me, and to strive and pray without ceasing for my beloved family. No tongue can tell, amid my outward labours for God, the wanderings of my heart from Him. When, O when shall it be, that we receive out of Christ's

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fulness, that grace which shall teach us to live wholly to God, to God our Saviour.

Penrith, August 14th, 1825.

MY BELOVED WIFE,

Through the good providence of God, I have reached this place in safety, and having a few minutes to spare, I think that I cannot employ them better than by writing to you. I am less fatigued with travelling than I anticipated, though two nights' journey is more than is ordinarily prudent.

The coach was not full, which gave me some advantage, and I read a good deal; but my thoughts often revert to my beloved family, from whom in the providence of God I am so much separated, as if to prepare them and me for that greater separation which must take place, before we are finally and for ever united in the fruition of unutterable happiness above.

Let me have your constant prayers, that the Lord may prosper my way in His work to His glory, and that not only His kingdom in the world may be promoted, but His kingdom in my own heart. Day by day I find that every corruption is restrained, and any grace exercised, only by Sovereign mercy. The Lord seems to show me an extent of corruption within, beyond my worst conceptions, as if to keep me very abased and low, in the midst of the extended work in which it pleases Him that I should labour.

Ever your affectionate Husband,

E. BICKERSTETH.

London, June 4, 1825.

MY BELOVED MOTHER,

The month comes round again for me to write to you, and sure I am that if I were only to record the mercies of each month, I should ever have more than enough to fill long letters to you. God blesses me in my going out, and in my coming in, and to Him be all the praise.

Our Anniversary was highly gratifying—the contributions much

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exceeded those of former years, and the spirit of the addresses was truly Christian.

Soon after the meeting I set off to Cambridge, and had the formidable office of preaching our annual sermons at Mr. Simeon's church, before two hundred gownsmen, and attending the meeting after; but God was with us, and blessed us with a better spirit and larger contributions than we had had previously.....

What little prospect we have of ever meeting together as one family upon earth; and how should our affections be set on that better kingdom where we hope for one home, and to join one family, and to magnify one Saviour through eternity! O my dear mother! how little is my heart set on that joy, and how needful are the constant supplies of that blessed Spirit, who alone can raise our affections to things above!

My book, the Christian Hearer, almost stands still for want of any time to give to it. The "Scripture Help" has been vigorously attacked by the Roman Catholics. I should be glad if you could see the account of the Tract Society meeting, where I was personally opposed by a Roman Catholic. Nothing could be more unfounded than the charge which he selected. I feel it rather an honour than otherwise to be so attacked. I feel it to be a duty to bear a decided testimony against that Antichristian system, which the Scriptures describe under the most odious terms, and reprobate with every expression of disgust; but I trust that this testimony will ever be borne in the spirit of our Master, Christ, that of meekness and humility, compassion and love.

Are we likely to see you? I can only say, you could not give us a higher joy than to come to see us.

Ever most affectionately yours,

E. BICKERSTETH.

Islington, September 8, 1825.

MY DEAR MOTHER,

It pleases God deeply to try us in our West Africa mission, and we have just heard of the loss of another labourer. I am often

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cast down by the difficulties of that great work in which I labour, and feel disposed to long for a less responsible post; but God forbid that I should ever shrink from the work to which He has called me, while He is pleased to give me health and strength to labour for Him.

O may we all have grace to be dead to this world, and alive only to our Saviour! We are happy while living near to Him, and receiving out of His fulness. I am every day more sensible, I think, that I am utterly lost without Christ, and infinitely blessed only in and by Him. This world is vain and unsatisfying, because He is so much absent; the future is so blessed, because there we shall ever be with Him.

Most affectionately yours,
E. BICKERSTETH.

In the autumn Mr. Bickersteth's brother-in-law, Mr. Samuel Bignold, offered him the use of a farm-house at Ridlington, a very secluded spot on the Norfolk coast, where his family spent several weeks, but his own duties in London prevented his accompanying them. At this time the following reflections are found in his journal.

"*September* 11*th*, 1825. My dear family have all now left me for the sea-side. O that this may be a season of solitude duly improved, and to be much remembered! I pray God that it may so be. I greatly need a revival. I believe that if I had days of fasting and earnest seeking of God, I and my family, and my congregation, and my Society, would have much larger measures of the Divine blessing.

"There is a traitor within, a vile, carnal, impure heart, that soils and taints all my course, that obscures the Divine light, and withers my comforts, and depresses and deadens all my spiritual energies. I could not but earn-

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estly, and with many tears, plead the promises in Ezekiel xxxvi. as to cleansing from filthiness, and the new heart, and God's laws written in it, this morning. My hope is in those promises; Satan shall not always triumph.

"God has enabled me to prepare for the press a fourth Treatise,—'the Christian Hearer,' now printing. May He pardon all the sins which have mingled with the writing of it, and may He bless it to more extensive good than any of my former works. O how grateful have I reason to be for the success of my publications!"

He was anxious that his family should derive the same benefit from retirement, which he hoped for himself, and wrote thus to his wife:

I stayed at home on Sunday morning, and found the season of retirement, of which I have now so very little, exceedingly profitable. O how, in our best state, our spirits become carnal and worldly, and faith, hope and love are lost! Our own infirmities should make us very tender towards others. I pray God that your present secluded situation may be made profitable to your spiritual interests, through prayer, meditation, and reading the Scriptures. You cannot be a Christian mother, however you may be an affectionate, careful, and watchful mother over your children, but as you have Divine grace poured into your own soul. God must teach you, ere you can teach them. May we think of these things as the highest and most important duties that we have to discharge.

When he joined them for a short time, he rejoiced in the opportunity of instructing the simple villagers around.

Ridlington, Norfolk, October 6, 1825.

MY BELOVED MOTHER,

..... I have been much gratified by considerable opportunities of doing good here. I have had a large congregation every evening

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of farmers, labourers, and their wives and children, whom I have endeavoured to instruct in the first principles of the Gospel, and I trust, with some pleasing tokens of the Divine blessing. They have been remarkably eager, and constant, and attentive in hearing. I have had another help to do good in the kindness of the Rev. W. Wilson, who has allowed me £10 worth a-year of tracts to distribute in my journeyings.

We all rejoice in the comfort which you must find in our new sister, and only are a little disposed to be jealous that she and R. should have the sweet privilege of watching over the declining years of so beloved a parent. But the time is very short for all here. Soon we, and those we love, shall be called to our heavenly home, and there we shall meet our dear father, and many beloved and long-lost relatives and friends, never, never to be sundered. O may our hearts be raised to that blessed scene! mine sadly grovels here below. The blessed Spirit alone can quicken and elevate, and purify our affections, and fix them on things above. O for more of His influence! this, this is the one great thing we and the church and the heathen world require.

Your ever affectionate Children,
E. and S. BICKERSTETH.

In November he wrote again to his mother.

Church Missionary House, November 12th, 1825.

We yesterday sent forth TWENTY-FOUR fresh labourers to the heathen world. A holy and happy meeting, at Freemasons' Hall, deeply sympathised with us on the interesting occasion.

Preparations for this meeting, and getting on with the "Christian Hearer," have pressed me very closely for some time. May our Lord graciously again own this fresh effort to the good of many. I rejoice to labour for Him. . . .

A pamphlet which was published this year, attacking

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Mr. Bickersteth's writings, gave rise to the following notice in his journal.

"*December* 3, 1825. I am charged by —— with being an enemy to the free, sovereign, and everlasting grace of God in Christ, and that the principle which I maintain is—man co-operating, as in a joint free partnership with God, to do good,—God working and not working. My mind is not conscious that I have departed from God's word. If I have, even a hair's-breadth, may the good Spirit discover it to me!"

In December his "Christian Hearer" was finished, and sent to his mother, with the following letter.

Church Missionary House, December 16*th*, 1825.

MY BELOVED MOTHER,

I was in hopes that I should have been able to have sent you and Robert my "Christian Hearer" before this. I am glad, however, to be able to send it now, and shall be truly thankful, if you find useful information or spiritual benefit from it. I find that it is likely soon to come to a Second Edition. As far as I can at present see, it is not probable that I shall be able to undertake any farther works, though I had an idea of going through the means of grace, as Baptism, Meditation, &c., and then closing with a "Treatise on the Work of the Spirit," in His freedom and sovereignty, operating through a Mediator, and giving power and effect to all means. But I see no prospect of my present duties allowing me to go on with this design. I am thankful to that gracious Father, who, beyond my hopes, has blessed me in it hitherto. . . .

Well, in the midst of all toil and labour, may the Saviour be more simply relied on, more constantly looked to, more closely followed, and be increasingly precious. I find no sure footing but in Christ Jesus: Him would I love, Him would I serve, in Him would I confide. I have in my present situation much intercourse with the great and the good—but communion with the Saviour is a

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higher honour, and a greater bliss than any intercourse with the greatest and best of His saints. O may we, my beloved mother, walk constantly in Him, and increase in His knowledge.

Ever affectionately yours,

E. BICKERSTETH.

The next year, however, saw him engaged in the most laborious literary work he had ever undertaken, "The Christian Student." This book, owing to its larger size, and the limited class to whom it is addressed, has been less widely circulated than some of his earlier writings. It has, however, reached a fourth edition. It was written with the intention of guiding the Christian Student to the right principles of theological study, of warning him against the dangers attending it, of setting before him a general view of the theology of different ages of the Church, and of assisting him in his choice of books, by copious and carefully-arranged lists, with many critical annotations. Mr. Bickersteth had been himself such an eager collector of books, that he knew by experience the importance of judicious counsel, to guide the selections of the student, and he was so deeply impressed with the necessity of ministers being men of study, as well as piety, that he was anxious to afford his younger brethren every assistance in his power. The preparation of these lists cost him much anxious labour, and implied a great extent of reading. When writing this work, he considerably added to his own library. While he thus strove to direct the studies of others, he was not indifferent to the temptations to which his own might expose him.

"*March 5th*, 1826. I am in a very low state of Christian feeling and experience at this time, from, I fear, many neglected duties, and too eager a pursuit of study.

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And yet in what a scene of important and arduous work has my God placed me! O that He may but give me a spirit for my blessed work. O Lord my God, give me a Missionary soul, wisdom, devotedness, diligence, faith, hope, deadness to the world, and ardent love to Christ, and to souls purchased with His blood.

"O raise me out of my selfish, worldly, self-indulgent, literary, careless walking, to that higher state which Thy blessed word sets before me. Then shall I be a blessing more abundantly to Thy cause, and to my family, to Thy Church, and to the world."

In the same spirit, he watched against the distractions occasioned by his long and exciting journeys.

"*July* 23*rd*, 1826. It is not with me, as I hoped it would have been. O no. I am disposed to think it is not by any means, in many respects, so well with me as it has been.

"I feel the dissipating effects of much journeying, and they are not removed by a restoration to home duties; for I do not again come to the self-denial of early rising, and much prayer, and reading the Scriptures diligently and closely.

"But journeys would not be dissipating, nor home duties set aside, were there not an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. O put Thy fear into my heart, blessed Lord, that I may not depart from Thee, O my God!

"I am prevented preaching this afternoon, by an unexpected return of hoarseness in my morning sermon. O Lord, how entirely I may be laid aside by Thee at any moment! May I diligently fulfil present duties.

"The view of neglected duties of every kind, is some-

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times quite frightful. No hope have I, but in the Lord Jesus. O may He be formed in me, the hope of glory, and may my life more exhibit the reality of my union with Him.

"*August* 11*th*, 1826. The good I would, I do not, the evil I would not, that I do. This is my experience. I easily slip to evil. I climb up with difficulty to good. My dear family is again gathered together, and I hope to go with them to Herts, exchanging houses with a friend for a few weeks; the Lord make it a season of much blessing to my own soul, and to those to whom I go. O that His grace may work in me self-denial! I feel the force of my Redeemer's words, 'If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.' All blessings flow in this channel—all evils come in self-indulgence and sloth. O my Saviour, for the short remaining portion of my life, be it thirty years, or be it so many hours, or so many moments, give me grace to deny myself, and to live to Thee who didst die for me; not looking to a season of rest below, but above—not calculating on a time of enjoyment on earth, but preparing for it in heaven.

"Especially may I watch over my household, as one that must give account, and may I be faithful to my Society. These things I ask, for Christ's sake."

He little thought that the few weeks' residence at Stapleford, alluded to in the foregoing extract, was to prove the first link in a chain of circumstances, which would lead to his own settlement in that neighbourhood. At the time, he much enjoyed the retirement, and the duties of a country pastor. "I am doing," he wrote to his mother, "the duty of Mr. Prowett, which is a new and interesting

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employment. The parish only contains two hundred people, but they flock to church from the neighbouring parishes, and there is a very nice school. I have often thought of my brother John's retired scene while at Stapleford, and been sometimes tempted to desire such a retreat from the anxiety, labour, and responsibility of my present post; but, I trust, I am very thankful to Him, who uses me in carrying on His own kingdom, and would supremely and mainly desire to be faithful. . . . . Nothing could be more pleasing, than the plan on which I exchange dwellings with our dear friend Prowett, and the kindness with which he has arranged all things for our comfort. . . . Thus goodness and mercy follow us, all flowing from free love to the unworthy in Christ Jesus. It is most delightful to trace all up to that source."

It was a year of many cares and labours in the Society, and though he had been relieved by the appointment of the Rev. T. Woodrooffe as Joint Secretary, he was often heavily burdened. God however upheld him by a sense of the importance of the work to which he was called. "I feel increasingly," he wrote, "the magnitude, the blessedness, and the pre-eminent glory of this noble scheme of benevolence, the evangelizing of a benighted world."

In December he wrote to his mother,

I do thank Christ, that I have been called to that blessed work in which I am privileged to labour, and how remarkably called! I could not rest in the Post-Office, I could not rest in the law, but both prepared me for my present work; for while in them, I learnt that precious Gospel, which it is now my joy to try to communicate through the world. The Saviour has been full of grace, to one who has been full of all evil, and still has a heart prone to depart from

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Him. I get on, at intervals, with the "Christian Student," but it requires more wisdom and knowledge than any previous publication, and is the most arduous work that ever I undertook. Give me your prayers, that I may have the wisdom that is profitable to direct men's minds to those works and that study, which shall most advance the Divine glory and their own everlasting salvation. I hope that I get considerable good, while I am endeavouring to convey good to others.

A violent attack on our Society is threatened by the Scotch, who have troubled the Bible Society. God will try, and punish, and bless; and my confidence is in Him:—if He humbles, yet He will lift us up in the end. But we live in eventful and arduous times, and I have sometimes been ready to envy John his quiet retreat at Acton, while I seem placed in the fore-front of observation and conflict. Yet I do not retract in better moments my thankfulness to that Saviour, who calls me here to serve Him.

The sermon list of this year expresses the same feelings, it closes with the words, *Weary and heavy-laden, but at rest in Christ.*

Much grace and wisdom were still bestowed on him, for the extensive correspondence which rested on him, with Missionaries in every part of the world. On his return from Africa, he had established at the Church Missionary House, a Prayer-meeting, similar to that which he had appointed to be observed by the Missionaries abroad. This Prayer-meeting was often a season of much refreshment to his own spirit, and he frequently cheered the heart of the distant Missionary, by reminding him, how he and his station were thus every week commended to God. Wherever it was possible, he strove to introduce the practice in the foreign stations of the Society, that thus there might be a holy concert of prayer

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ascending from many lands, for the great work of the Missions. To Archdeacon Corrie, in India, he wrote, August 3rd, 1826. "Our Saturday evening Prayer-meeting at the Missionary House is continued, and much refreshes us from week to week. It is a great relief to commit our holy and heavenly cause to Him, who governs all things for the good of His Church. . . I trust we shall soon send you some valuable men, qualified to occupy the leading posts in Calcutta. But, after all, our best hopes in man are poor and vain, and the best men dust and ashes. Surely, in the history of Missions, we are especially taught, 'Cease ye from man!' If valuable, how soon removed by death, or how do little infirmities mar their usefulness. God is continually teaching us, not to trust, or glory, or rejoice in any creature, but to come to Him, the full ocean of every good, and draw out of His fulness all our wisdom, strength, joy, and happiness."

The following letter was written to encourage some brethren who had just commenced their labours at a station recently established.

December 8th, 1826.

DEAR BRETHREN, MITCHELL AND STEWARD,

We have been anxious to hear of your arrival in Bombay, and shall be thankful to find that the Lord has indeed brought you safely to your station.

Mr. Kenny has given us a good deal of information respecting his schools; and we hope, from his representations, that you will find the ground prepared for your labours, however many the difficulties must undoubtedly be in a commencing mission.

When we look at our past experience, we feel that you must have trials, many trials, and we desire to sympathise with you and your wives, in all the unexpected disappointments you may experience;

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but what a blessing you have to convey, what a Saviour you have always with you, what promises you have to cheer you! What a powerful Spirit, to make your words effective! Our hopes are strong, that you and we shall see the fruit of your labours in the advancement of the Divine glory, and growth of His kingdom.

You continue to have our prayers and love.

Ever affectionately yours,

E. BICKERSTETH.

A month later, after receiving their Journal, Mr. Bickersteth wrote thus to Mr. Mitchell.

Your Journal partakes something of that spirit of depression which has sometimes made us anxious respecting your comfort in your work. Be of good courage, our Saviour will do by you all that is for the glory of His name, and you shall perform a part of the needful work, for gathering in His elect, and hastening the coming of His kingdom. We must not judge of His favour and acceptance by the success of our labours, but by the spirit of faith, hope, and love which He gives us. Peace, with grace be with you.

The following was sent in February 1826, to Mr. W——, a Missionary in North India.

God is at work on a large scale, but being Omnipotent, Sovereign, and Wise, in all His proceedings, He works, not after our scanty and contracted views, but progressively, and very slowly, yet surely, surmounting all obstacles to bring on the kingdom of His dear Son. As in the progress of day in our own country, the dawning of light may be discerned, a very considerable time before the sun appears, and the progress of light is hardly discernible, yet it advances surely, till the day fully breaks upon us. It is your privilege to be an instrument in His hands for the work. O may you walk humbly and stedfastly in His service. He has bestowed on you, gifts of zeal and activity. These are immense advantages. You are exposed to some special temptations; none are more dan-

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gerous than those which are most common to all our hearts, pride, self-wisdom, and a high opinion of our own plans. May we be empty of self, and filled with a desire to glorify only Him whom we love and serve.

Mr. Raban, one of the Missionaries in Africa, had sent home a faithful account of the discouragements he met with, and it had been made use of by the opponents of the Society. Mr. Bickersteth, who delighted in open dealing, wrote thus to encourage him.

December 8th, 1826.

DEAR BROTHER RABAN,

The enemies of our cause have made bad use of your upright and candid report. But let us ever have the simple truth. It is due to God, and it is due to man, and it never can ultimately injure a holy cause like ours, and if it did, we had better suffer here, than triumph by any thing like insincerity.

Very interesting in contrast with this, is the affectionate warning sent to another, whom the Lord had graciously honoured with success in South India.

DEAR BROTHER,

It gives us always great pleasure to hear from you, and the progress of your Mission has been one of the most encouraging facts in the proceedings of the Society.

You will always be careful to give us, as far as lies in your power, *just views* of what is passing; not only as many watchful eyes of the enemies of Missions are upon us, and many suspicious eyes of friends, but as the Spirit, whose work all success is, is grieved by any thing that is not the simple view of His work. It is eminently a part of Christian faith and confidence in the Divine wisdom, to mark and state just what the Divine hand is accomplishing; assured that His ways are right, and He knows what is most for His own

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glory; needful success, to encourage His servants, and needful want of success, to try their graces.

We doubt not that you have kept this in mind, and that as the Lord has blessed you with a remarkable blessing in the Mission, so He will continue to be with you to the end. We cease not to remember you continually and affectionately in our prayers to Him.

The Mediterranean Mission was peculiar in its character. Its main object was, to revive the fallen Churches of the East, and through them, to reach the heathen nations on which they bordered. The first object of the Missionary was, to ascertain the real condition of these Churches of which little was known, and the best method of restoring to them the light of truth which they had lost. God graciously raised up men of learning and piety, peculiarly adapted to carry on such researches. With Messrs. Jowett, Connor, and Hartley, Mr. Bickersteth delighted to carry on a correspondence, marked by the full confidence of brotherly love.

Church Missionary House, August 26, 1826.

DEAR BROTHER HARTLEY,

It has been a great comfort to have your journals regularly, and while we have heard of your zeal and love from other quarters, to have evidence in your own journal and letters, that the love of the Saviour still glows in your heart, and animates your spirit to persevering labours for Him. We have been often refreshed in spirit by following you in your course, and marking how doors of usefulness have opened to you.

You are now, as we suppose, in Constantinople, at a season when events deeply interesting have recently taken place. It is one of our privileges as Christians and Christian ministers, to take no part or share in political measures, but to do as much good, at all times, as we can, to the bodies and souls of men. We shall look

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with eagerness for your continued accounts, and follow you, as we have done, from week to week, with our fervent prayers, that the Lord may keep you fervent in spirit, walking closely with Him, humble-minded, strong in faith, and labouring with a single eye and heart in His service, and embracing every opportunity of testifying to all, both high and low, rich and poor, the unsearchable riches of Christ.

Inform us what access you have to the Jews at Constantinople, and any particulars respecting their present views and hopes. Mr. Wolff seems to have been remarkably qualified for usefulness among them.

You will have heard before this, how we have been able to strengthen the Mediterranean Mission by five Lutheran missionaries and a printer. We trust they may be honoured instruments of diffusing Divine truth wherever they go, and that some of its cheering beams may reach poor Abyssinia.

We cannot but look with great pleasure at the number of tracts and copies of Scripture, which you have distributed or sold in different places where you have been. Perhaps many of these are now conveying light and faith, and hope and love, to those whom we shall never know till the great day declares it. The printing-press of Malta is in this view an engine of immense value, of which we doubt not that we shall increasingly see the importance.

The Lord prosper you in all your ways, and give us the joy of hearing good tidings through you, for His Son's sake.

Ever affectionately yours,

E. BICKERSTETH.

In 1827, he wrote the following meditation on his birthday.

"*March* 18*th*, 1827. To-morrow being my birthday, when I shall have passed forty-one years in this sinful world, I desire to make it, as much as my varied duties will allow, a season for self-examination and self-recollec-

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tion, that it may be a season of renewal, and spiritual restoration,

"I have been much struck with Archbishop Ussher's dying prayer, for forgiveness of sins of omission. He was a man of much study and learning, and possibly, in pursuing and acquiring knowledge, had been tempted to neglect more actual duties. I have felt this to be a snare. With a purpose of preparing for the Christian Student, I have greatly multiplied books, and given time to study, which other duties should have had. Lord, forgive me, and help me hereafter to pursue the self-denying duty to which Thou callest me, rather than the self-gratifying pursuit of my own heart.

"I have not duly prepared for my public ministry. God has graciously assisted my imperfect preparations, but herein I have been guilty, that in so weighty a work, I have served Him negligently.

"I feel the same neglects with regard to the Society. Several very important parts of my duty have been very slightly and perfunctorily fulfilled, such as correspondence with the Missionaries, &c.

"Nor have I kept my heart with diligence: there have been several very painful and humbling outbreakings of that inward corruption which defiles and destroys. It is nothing but infinite and exhaustless grace that upholds and preserves me in the way of the Lord.

"What a responsible post I have, and how little am I duly alive to my responsibilities. As a Secretary, what an important Society am I connected with! As a Minister, in what a city do I labour! As a father, what a charge in my own four children and two nieces! As a master, and husband, what duties! And oh! in the midst of these,

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what self-indulgence and forgetfulness of God. I deserve to be cast out like the unfaithful steward.

"Precious Saviour! my hope is all in Thy grace. Nothing else can meet my wants—my past state calls for multiplied pardons; my present state of weakness, and decline, and barrenness, calls for immediate help and strength.

"Help me to redeem the time hereafter. How precious time!—the seed-plot of eternity, the season of escape from deserved and never-ending ruin; the opportunity of gaining the Saviour's everlasting bliss and glory."

In May 1827, Mr. Bickersteth was again called to the trial of losing a son at its birth. "We feel the loss," he wrote in his Journal, "and see the rod, but God is full of love; it was needed, and it is all well. We feel it worth all the sorrow, to have another child in heaven. The passage Jer. xxxi. 16, 17., came in the course of family reading to our comfort. This loss has endeared to us our other children as God's gift. The very day before, Mr. D. Wilson had been called to part with his wife by her death, and the day before that, Legh Richmond was called to his reward, and left Mrs. R. a widow. In the midst of the tribulations of the righteous, how light our present afflictions, how great our present mercies!"

The Church Missionary Society had for many years been connected with the Missionary Institution at Basle. Several of its Missionaries had been educated there. One of the students from Basle having been found to have imbibed principles of universalism, the Committee were anxious to ascertain, whether due care were taken to preserve the strict orthodoxy of that seminary. They were also anxious to gain full information, as to the whole

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system carried on there, both with reference to the Students they might receive from Basle, and to the regulations of their College at Islington. Mr. Bickersteth, therefore, and Mr. Coates, the Assistant Secretary, were appointed to visit Basle as a deputation in July 1827. Mrs. Bickersteth accompanied her husband, and they took the opportunity of extending their journey, so as to visit some of the most interesting scenes in Switzerland and the North of Italy. They sailed for Ostend June 20th, thence they proceeded to Basle through the Netherlands. Here they remained a week, occupied with the business of the Society. Their visit proved very satisfactory. On their return, the deputation had to record their gratification and delight, at the simplicity, piety, and zeal, which they had observed in all who were connected with the Basle Institution. From Basle, Mr. and Mrs. Bickersteth proceeded on their tour through Switzerland, crossing into Italy by the pass of St. Gothard. They went as far south as Milan ; in this city, Mr. Bickersteth's heart was not a little stirred within him, at the popish superstition he witnessed within the walls of the beautiful cathedral. From Milan, they returned by the Sardinian territories, through Domo D'Ossola, to Switzerland. Leaving his wife at Geneva, he visited Chamouni. During the journey he preached at Liege, Carlsruhe, Basle, Airolo, Siders, and Geneva. He returned to London on the 11th of August.

In a letter to his sister-in-law at Liverpool, from Dijon, August 2nd, 1827, he relates the impressions this tour had left upon his mind.

Some things have struck me much in this journey. 1st. The wonderful works of God in creation. The hills and mountains of

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Switzerland are perfectly surprising, and connected with most interesting circumstances in history and religion. It was delightful to visit the scenes where Swiss liberty originated, and still more delightful to visit those regions in which the pure light of the Reformation dawned, and with this was joined some of the most magnificent scenery of nature.

2nd. The sad corruptions of Popery deeply wounded our hearts. I never knew Popery so thoroughly before, and never saw it before to be so great an evil; such an enchaining, debasing, and degrading system; such a finished system for leading men captive, mind and body, at the will of the priesthood, and to their eternal ruin. The system of confession alone is an immense evil, in the fraud it puts on the conscience of the sinner, and the power it gives to the priest.

3rd. The view of the interesting characters that God is raising up in the midst of the darkness of these countries is highly gratifying. At Brussels, at Liege, at Hesse Darmstadt, at Strasburgh, in Basle, in Zurich, at Lausanne, at Geneva, as well as at various other places, God has raised up those who zealously love His dear Son Jesus Christ, and seek to promote his kingdom. It was very interesting to me to see these excellent men—some very eminent for their works and labours of love—as Leander Von Ess at Darmstadt, M. Blumhardt at Basle, Antistes Hess at Zurich, MM. Malan, Gaussen and others at Geneva.

4th. The works of art are very wonderful. The Simplon road is a specimen in one way of what may be done by man in overcoming difficulties, and accomplishing a most beneficial and important work with apparently almost insurmountable obstructions. The pictures of ancient masters in the collections gathered together in different cities, are another specimen of the power of man. O that such talents were more unreservedly devoted to Him who gave them.

5th. The blow given to Popery by the French Revolution is very striking. It bears the marks of decline, and though the dreadful wound is for a time healed, I think that it cannot be perfectly cured;

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and this immense fabric of superstition, that dishonours God, and debases Europe, must soon tumble to the ground.

6th. We have learned, we hope, to be more content with, and more thankful for our blessings in England. While I attribute some of our difficulties and troubles to our ignorance of customs and languages, yet after all, independent of the incalculable blessing of a purer faith, England has more civilization, more sincerity, more real comfort than any land I have yet seen. O that Englishmen knew and responded to its wonderful advantages, and its vast obligations to the Divine Saviour.

Ever most affectionately yours,

E. BICKERSTETH.

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CHAPTER XVI.

TO THE CLOSE OF HIS LABOURS IN THE METROPOLIS.

A. D. 1827—1830.

HITHERTO Mr. Bickersteth's labours in the Church had been chiefly those of an Evangelist, travelling from place to place, to stir up the zeal of God's people throughout the land. He had often, however, longed for a more fixed ministerial charge, and for the intimate ties which bind a pastor to his own flock. This feeling was so strong, that in December 1819 he had consulted his parents, as to the possibility of obtaining, through some friend, a small London living from the Chancellor. "It is not," he wrote, "the income of the living, so much as a more fixed and regular duty, that I am desirous of. The Wheler Chapel afternoon service has long been a trial to me." In 1823, when the living of St. Stephen's was proposed to Mr. Pratt, he hoped that that dear friend would have seen it right to have entrusted to him the entire charge of Wheler Chapel. Mr. Pratt, however, considered that the interests of the congregation would be incompatible with Mr. Bickersteth's journeys for the Society; and so large a blessing had attended these, that he was very unwilling they should be relinquished. "I am well aware," he wrote, "of the strong bias of your own mind, towards

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a pastoral charge, and the self-denial and sacrifices which your course of labour for the Society requires; and most gladly would I help forward, as speedily as practicable, such an arrangement as might enable you to attain more of that ministerial and domestic comfort which you desire; but until it pleases God to open the way for this, you would feel yourself unhappy to have anticipated the time of retirement, if that which has prospered so much under your care, should cease to prosper." On these grounds, Mr. Mortimer was appointed to take the service at Wheler Chapel. In 1827, however, when he resigned the morning service, it was entrusted to Mr. Bickersteth, and Mr. Mortimer also desired to make arrangements for his friend to take the evening service at his new church, St. Mark's, Clerkenwell. There thus seemed every prospect of his being called to the work he so eagerly desired. "Very important scenes of usefulness," he wrote in his journal, "are opening before me. The morning congregation at Wheler Chapel—the evening at the New Church at Clerkenwell. What a season should it previously be, of fasting, preparation and prayer!

"I have had a humiliating afternoon ministry now for eleven years—humiliating, as it has pleased God that the congregation should ever be small, and that I should see little fruit of my labour. I may well therefore look forward with some fears to the future.

"What then are my comforts?

"These stations are not of my own seeking, but of God's calling.

"His grace is able to abound in the midst of all my insufficiencies.

"He has helped me through many trying scenes in past days.

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"His promises are, 'As thy day is, so shall thy strength be.'

"And what are my views and purposes?

"I do hope in every thing to commence anew, devoting myself more unreservedly in the power of the Spirit to my Redeemer, particularly in my ministry.

"God forbid that I should seek human applause and honour.

"God forbid that I should preach in strife and vain glory.

"God forbid that I should be negligent, and offer to the Lord that which costs me nothing.

"I hope and pray that I may preach every sermon in honour of Christ my Lord.

"I hope and pray that I may meditate much on the sermons of my ministry, and give myself heartily to full preparation.

"May I be kept on the one hand from legal preaching.

"May I on the other be kept from every thing tending to Antinomianism.

"May I, in short, in every thing preach Jesus Christ, both for justification and sanctification.

"May I have wisdom given me to know, and grace given me to declare, the whole counsel of God, so as to keep back nothing that is profitable for my people.

"If possible, may I be enabled to get more into social and ministerial intercourse with the congregation.

"If possible, may the poor and sick have a measure of time.

"May I ever set before me the unspeakable value of the precious and immortal soul, and with the utmost tenderness and earnestness seek nothing but its salvation.

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"God deliver me from all care and anxiety about the temporal advantage, and give me only one thought—His glory in the spiritual welfare of the people.

"Let all my sermons come home to the bosoms of those that hear for their practical and constant advantage.

"Above all, may I every day spend some portion of time in prayer for my congregations."

Unexpected circumstances prevented Mr. Mortimer from carrying out the plan he had proposed. Mr. Bickersteth felt severely the loss of this evening service, to which he had looked forward with very great interest.

"*December* 30, 1827. It has pleased God to humble me, by the loss of the expected Sunday evening lecture at St. Mark's, Clerkenwell. Thus I am left without that service in which I had hoped to glorify my Saviour, by preaching His truth in my own neighbourhood. The Divine dispensations are perfectly right and just, wise and merciful. I record this as my deliberate judgment, while I feel pained to the innermost spirit by this stroke. Many, many lessons are to be learned.

"I was utterly unworthy, in every sense and way, to have such a door opened to me. My God, Thou knowest my foolishness, and my sins are not hid from Thee, and wherefore should a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?

"God here shows me my past unfaithfulness; had I been faithful in lesser scenes, He would not have withheld greater from me. O how little am I of a real minister of Christ—in previous study and prayer—in intercourse with, and in intercession for, my people. God help me to be more faithful in future.

"But the whole circumstances have been very painful. I record them that I may, should the Lord spare me,

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review the way in which He has led me. . . . Yet is He my Father; yet is He my Benefactor; yet has He done, and will do, all things well. He is, He has, He will. I commit my way to the Lord. I look off from man: I look to my God and Father.

"*January* 1*st*, 1828. Brought in God's tender mercy to the beginning of another year, I desire to commit all that is before me to Him.

"What is before me? O how uncertain!—my life—my wife's—my six children—my post of duty, and my ministry. For my maintenance, my usefulness—my victory over temptations—my standing fast; I am entirely in the hands of God.

"But I would not be any where else. There came last night, in the order of family reading, a passage inexpressibly suitable to me, Ezek. xvi. 63, 'Never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame; when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done.' No, my Father, never can I open my mouth in complaint or self-justification before Thee, when I look at my corruptions and my transgressions.

"And, welcome trials, crosses, and mortifications—if they only bring me into communion with Thee, and into closer walking with Thee. Oh, how loose has been my walk with Thee—what a distance—what a forgetfulness of privilege—but Thou art pacified, not by my goodness, but by Thy grace—not in my effort, but in Thy Son's mediation. O let me walk in this blessed pacification!

"What a wayward prodigal son the heavenly Father has in me. I am only near to Him, and serve Him, as He chastises and humbles me.

"Well, I must look to my great Head, in whom I am

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accepted. He is altogether lovely. He has all-sufficient grace. I would abide in Him, that by Him I may bear fruit. May all crosses, and sorrows, and difficulties draw me to Christ, and then all crosses will be full of profit.

"And, Oh, how soon the present scene will be over, and how little will it then avail, to have had honour and ease, and literary reputation, and a distinguished station. All the objects of human ambition, if attained, may then only aggravate our ruin, and who can with safety be too eager after, even stations of enlarged usefulness, when those stations bring increased responsibility, as well as increased usefulness, increased cares as well as increased opportunities of serving Christ.

"*April 6th. Easter Sunday.* Many mercies, and some crosses, mark my course. It has pleased God, that applications made, not by me, but for me, and with many prospects of success, for four different churches have failed, Cloudesley, St. Mark's, Ethelburga, and Spitalfields. The will of the Lord be done.

"The morning congregation is another trial. Mr. Pratt's congregation followed him, and Mr. Mortimer's followed him, and it is not a large congregation that attends me, though I have to be thankful under circumstances, that it is not smaller."

One of the unsuccessful efforts here alluded to, came into collision with a proposal made to one of his intimate friends respecting the same church. In writing to explain the matter to him, he gives a full view of the motives which had led him to desire the charge.

"When I heard from Mr. W——, which I did distinctly, that you were not likely to come, and that he was looking out for a minister, I told this to Mr. Pratt, and

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opened to him my desire of in some measure loosening myself from the load of care and anxiety, which the more secular work of the Society gives me, and entering more upon that to which my ministerial vows bind me,—the more direct work of the ministry; a way seemed to me, to be opened for both, without real injury to the Society, and with great mental relief to myself.

"Few persons can conceive the care, and responsibility, and conflict of mind, which such a post as my present necessarily involves. To be the advocate of our great cause, in the midst of the various conflicting opinions, both within and without, and to have to enter into the vast variety of matters of business which come before us, so as to form a judgment, and maintain and defend that judgment, and to plan, originate, and carry through, measures for the extension of this great work, is a burden under which I groan, and of which I often entertain doubts, whether it be accordant to that giving ourselves to the work of the ministry, and to prayer, which marks every faithful minister, and to accomplish which he must lay aside whatever interferes with this.—But I feel so strongly, there can be no blessing in any station or work, but as our heavenly Father appoints to it, that I would not for the world urge my wishes on our friend Mr. W—. I have taken the step to which I seemed called, and am perfectly satisfied with the will of our heavenly Father."

"I daily commit myself, my work, and the cause of our common Master, to Him, and though I feel that I shall not long be able to sustain the present load, leave to Him that relief which he shall in His own good time see fit to give me."

In a letter to his wife, a few days after, he thus

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expresses his confidence, that God would order all rightly, as to his ministerial duties. "The Lord will direct all as it pleases Him, He is King of the whole earth, and we rejoice in His government, and are happy in that His will designs; and He brings to pass far greater happiness for us and His church, than our will either conceives, or could accomplish."

In May, he resumed the afternoon-service at Wheler Chapel, though under very discouraging circumstances.

"*May 4th*, 1828. On this Sunday, the afternoon-duty is committed to me. It has been found, that in consequence of the changes, and considerable parts of the congregation following Mr. Pratt and Mr. Mortimer, many of the pews are unlet, and the income of the Chapel will afford a very small remuneration for the ministry.

"But I will wait upon the Lord. I deserve every evil, of every kind. Perhaps these are the dark clouds by which showers of mercy may come down upon me."

His journeys were not quite so numerous this year. He had made an arrangement with the Missionary Society, on Mr. Woodrooffe's appointment to the Secretaryship, that he was not to be more than twelve Sundays absent from his congregation. He took, however, long journeys to Bristol in March, into Lincolnshire in May, to Liverpool and Manchester in June, to Devonshire and Cornwall in July, besides shorter excursions. The following reflections occur in a letter from Bodmin, July 2nd.

"I should like to have had you with me in one part of my journey, on approaching Exeter. The morning had been misty and drizzling, but feeling feverish with journeying, I got outside, and it began to clear up in the West, with most beautiful gleams of light on the distant

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hills. I thought it an emblem of the Christian's hopes and prospects—this dark night shall terminate, the mists, and fogs, and damps shall be driven away, and the bright and blessed hope of a day of light, and life, and joy in the heavenly city shall be realized;—"The night is far spent, the day is at hand;" may we, beloved wife, often be cheered with this hope, and strengthened by it for every duty.

"We must calculate upon trouble here, indeed, ever in this world, for the curse is not removed wholly in this life: 'In sorrow shalt thou eat all the days of thy life, in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread;' but through redeeming love, all is turned to good."

The following letter to Mrs. Bickersteth was written from Tamworth in August 1828, shortly after the birth of their seventh child.

How many and important are the duties in which your recovered strength may be employed. . . . I know that you feel this, and it is our happiness, that there is in Christ a fulness of grace for all this; and treasures of wisdom are hid in Him, and His grace is sufficient, and His strength shall be made perfect in our weakness. Oh! that He should use such sinners as we are *at all!* O! that He should use us for such great and important services! The public character that I have been compelled to possess from my public situation, has made it of peculiar moment as it regards the cause of God, the character of my labours, the character of the Society, and those great truths of the Gospel, which it is my wish to preserve, and hand down to them that follow; that my children should be eminently children of God, and eminently devoted to Him. God grant it for His dear Son's sake, and give us both grace to train them up in habits of piety and humility, self-denial and self-sacrifice, knowledge of the Scriptures, care for the poor, and all those labours of love which adorn the gospel."

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In this year Mr. Kugler, and Mr. Gobat, the present Bishop of Jerusalem, were employed by the Church Missionary Society in an important expedition to Abyssinia, to endeavour to introduce the light of truth into that benighted region. They underwent great trials, little good seemed to result from their mission, and after some years the door was wholly closed in Abyssinia, and Christian missionaries were compelled to withdraw. Yet a mission carried on amidst such heavy discouragements, has proved the first link in a wonderful chain of God's providence, and Eastern Africa now promises to be one of the most interesting fields of missionary enterprise. Mr. Bickersteth could little foresee how his cheering anticipations were to be realized by Krapff and Rebmann, when he wrote the following letter to encourage Gobat and Kugler, in the commencement of their perilous undertaking. Still less could he have imagined, what we have since beheld,—this same Gobat occupying the important post of a Protestant bishop at Jerusalem, and solicited by one of the rulers of Abyssinia, to take charge of the Abyssinians in that city!

Church Mission House, Jan. 3, 1828.

DEAR BRETHREN,

We have duly received the letters which you have sent. Your gratifying journal dated August last, is now before us, and we are very thankful that our Heavenly Father seems so mercifully, as well as so manifestly, to prepare the way for your entrance into Abyssinia. . . . The opposition to the introduction of scriptural light was, of course, to be expected; but the Source of that light will not let His own grace be baffled, and His own cause thwarted; but will, in His own way, open great and effectual doors of access.

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We doubt not but that we may take great encouragement from the opposition that has been excited.

Your mission to Abyssinia will necessarily call for much faith and prayer. Your course will be very much directed by the path that our gracious God opens before you. The quiet circulation of the Scriptures, friendly and affectionate conversation with such persons as God shall give you access to; and an upright, open, and devout conduct in all your intercourse with them, will soon prepare the way for further usefulness. Let them see that you are men of prayer, and neglect not your social prayers because they are with you, but rather be more firm in this practice on that account.

We have directed our friends at Bombay to lodge a credit for you, as you requested. You are embarked in the service of Him, who being the Lord of heaven and earth, will never suffer you to want what is for your real good.

Should it please God that political circumstances make it needful for you to retire at present, and return even to Malta, this too shall be overruled for good. The enemy of man can do nothing ultimately against the truth. If he retard it for a time, it shall only be for its wider diffusion, and its more extended triumph in the result. Prayer-meetings are increasing among us, and the Mediterranean Mission is not forgotten by us. Grace be with you.

Ever affectionately yours,

E. BICKERSTETH.

November 18, 1829.

DEAR BROTHER GOBAT,

We suppose, from the last joint letter we received from you and Mr. Kugler, that you are now on your way to Abyssinia, though it is possible that circumstances may have arisen to hinder you from effecting your intention. We apprehend that you must not calculate on help from Mr. ——. Unless men are one with us in the bonds of the gospel, they will only render us such assistance as God shall constrain them to do, and there is an advantage in not being too intimately associated with them.

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You have already received all the general instructions which we need give; and we write now rather to assure you of our continued and affectionate interest and prayers, than to convey further directions as to your proceedings. We cannot but look on your whole mission with many mingled emotions of hope and fear, confidence and trembling, joy and anxiety; but we feel, as we trust you do, unspeakable comfort in the growing assurance, that this work is not ours, but our heavenly Master's, and that He is King of the whole earth. If Bruce could go to Abyssinia for the mere elucidation of the geographical position, if others can go for science and reputation; how much more may the Christian missionary, sustained by an Almighty arm, go in the service of his Divine Redeemer, and labour with the comfort of His assured promise, "Lo, I am with you always, to the end of the world."

You cannot be separated from your chief joy: communion with God our Saviour. He is as near to you when labouring in Abyssinia, as he is to us while writing to you. May we feel His presence, and being ourselves daily and hourly refreshed by the communications of His love, may we from our own experience of the blessedness of His salvation, speak good of His name, and bring others to partake of our joy.

We regret having heard so little from you directly, dear brother Gobat. We have been in part to blame, having been hindered from writing to you as frequently as we wished and hoped. But now you are likely to be separated in so distant a country, you must avail yourself of such opportunities as may occur, to write to us.

We were sorry to hear of your weakness of health. May the Lord in every way prosper you. We can enter into John's affectionate desire for Gaius on your behalf. "Beloved, I wish above all things, that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.

My dear fellow-labourers join me in every good wish.

Affectionately yours,

E. BICKERSTETH.

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In the autumn, Mr. Bickersteth was more encouraged about his Wheler Chapel congregation, and perceived some tokens of God's blessing resting on his labours. He writes thus in his journal.

"*October 5th*, 1828. How many are my mercies! God is, I trust, prospering somewhat more my congregation, and giving me an increasing interest in it. My many journeys and my varied duties in the Society and in the family weigh heavily upon me, but all would be easy but for sins. My sins are the burden too heavy for me to bear. Blessed Jesus, I believe thou didst bear them in thine own body on the tree.

"No tongue can tell the magnitude of my duties, but oh my leanness and unprofitableness! Blessed Jesus, though I am thy minister, never did one of thy meanest followers more infinitely need thy free salvation, thy constant help, than I do. My wants are very great and pressing.

"1. I want wisdom and grace for the ministry.

"Oh the help requisite here for rightly dividing the word of truth! Here are hundreds of immortal souls, sabbath after sabbath, waiting on my ministry. What subjects to take?—How to treat them?—To lose sight of every thing but thy glory and their everlasting good. Jesus, I do look for sufficient help. O do Thou, who hast called me to the ministry, make me faithful in that ministry, that I may save myself and them that hear me.

"2. I want ability and fidelity for the Society.

"What an office! to be Secretary of a Missionary Society for the heathen world! What a responsibility! If able and faithful, how large a blessing such an office opens before me! if negligent, indolent, and unfaithful,

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what a curse to the cause of Christ instead of a blessing! O Father, I am not what I ought to be. I have left undone what I ought to have done. But O Thou who hast called me to this post, enable me to be faithful and wise, holy and devoted in it. . . ."

"*October* 19, 1828. I have been tried and burdened this week by hearing of the illness of one of my dear children at Guildford, and by the impracticability, from public engagements, of going to her. They have been staying at Guildford above a month for change of air, and I have frequently gone; but this week I could not, and the accounts have been more serious each time, though I still hope that there is no real danger for her life. I need many blows, for I am most perverse, wayward, and rebellious; and my heavenly Father has dealt with me all along in such tender mercy, that where I deserved to be for ever cast off, he has but gently chastised me.

"I felt God's presence in the sermon this morning. I must take more pains in my ministry, and be more full of direct and earnest application in every part, if I would do their souls good. Statement of doctrine or practice, however correct, without constantly bringing it personally home to the heart and affections, will be very unprofitable. How much I have yet to learn as a minister.

"My God, I commit all my way unto Thee. Uphold me with thy free Spirit."

"There seemed a fair prospect of my getting Wheler Chapel for my life, but it is clouded at present. The proprietor wished to sell: I agreed to purchase at a certain sum. Mr. Tillard, a pious clergyman and proprietor of an estate near, agreed to buy, and give me the chapel for life; the bishop and the parish-incumbent had con-

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sented to my license; when, the incumbent suddenly dying, a fresh offer, at a greatly advanced price, by another person, is made to the vendor; and at present all is in uncertainty. This is the moment for faith, prayer, and resignation."

"*December* 7, 1828. *Before Sacrament.* The uncertainty about the chapel is not cleared altogether, but the prospect is more hopeful. If it be thy will, accomplish it; if not, conform my will to thine, O Father!

"And now I have that solemn festival before me, in which my Saviour's love is so sweetly exhibited, and I am so solemnly pledged to be his. There has been, I trust, more diligence and redemption of time in the last month; but still I fear that I have not holy wisdom and Christian simplicity in the right choice of work and employment of time, and that many duties are neglected, especially those which are most self-denying.

"O my soul, the grand proof that thou art doing the will of God, is not indefatigable industry, active zeal, doing many things that the world or the church commends, but it is here;—

"Dost thou take up self-denying duties and go through them steadily in their season, as readily as thou takest up and goest through those that are more agreeable and pleasant to thee?

"Dost thou take up spending and losing and wasting duties, in which money, health, strength, and toil are required, as well as gainful and profitable duties; and go through the thorny road as well as along the plain path, when thy way to Zion demands it?

"Dost thou again take up reproached, and despised, and scorned duties, confessing Christ before the ungodly,

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doing the work that brings obloquy as well as the work that brings commendation?

"Now here I have to return many a painful negative. Oh for grace wisely, and honestly, and patiently, and uprightly, to take up all duties that Christ my Redeemer brings before me and calls me to. He is a wise and kind Master; may I be a faithful servant, and set my whole heart on this one thing, hearing at the last from Him, 'Well done! good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.' But, blessed Jesus, thou art my hope, my righteousness, my strength. O let me contemplate Thee till thy Spirit makes me like Thyself. O let me, day by day, hear Thy voice, and follow Thee."

"*March* 1, 1829. O Lord Jesus! I bring my worldly, confused, wandering head and heart to Thee. Full of many thoughts, O do Thou come and expel every thing contrary to thy mind, and bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."

Mr. Bickersteth felt much the responsibility of a work like the Christian Student, in which he was called to pass judgment on so many of the writings of others. "I have endeavoured," he wrote, "to speak the truth in love, but fear that I may occasionally have fallen short both of truth and love. May the Lord pardon all that is amiss." On another occasion he says, "I have discovered an erroneous statement in one page, which it is very well was found out by me, and not by the critics. It would have conveyed a more unfavourable impression of an author than facts justified,—a thing of all others which I pray to be preserved from."

"*April* 5, 1829. The prospect of my having Wheler Chapel for life is more hopeful. O may it be to the Lord's

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glory! The temporal advantage is very small, but the spiritual benefit may be very great if the Lord prosper my labours."

In his extended journeys, Mr. Bickersteth had many opportunities of observing the state of the evangelical part of the church, and the peculiar dangers to which its members were exposed. His loving spirit was specially sensitive to any thing which might cause division among brethren, and he rejoiced to be allowed to act the part of a peace-maker. While travelling in March this year, he wrote, "I find the prophetical spirit doing injury to some. Men get full of their own views, and press them as all-essential, and speak as positively as if futurity were as open to them as what is past; and then others publicly speak against them; and so the dividing spirit of the age increases and spreads. If it goes on much more, Christians will have to walk solitarily to Zion, instead of in company, enjoying the full communion of saints. Oh! for more of that Divine Spirit which first unites and then warms the whole body of Christ!"

Much excitement prevailed this spring on the passing of the Roman Catholic Emancipation Bill. Mr. Bickersteth was decidedly opposed to this fatal measure. "My mind," he writes, "remains unshaken. I do not fear man's wrath to our country, but I fear that we have displeased God, and may expect tokens of his displeasure." Speaking of the friends of the Society among whom he had been travelling, he wrote in another letter—"With remarkably few exceptions they are all *anti-catholic*. I am persuaded that by far the most general feeling of the religious body is the feeling against any concession to that anti-christian system." On Good-Friday, the following entry is found in his journal.

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"*April 7th*, 1829. This day is made by many, a day of fasting and prayer for national sins, and for a revival of religion. O that it may be extensively owned for that purpose, so that our national iniquities may be forgiven, and there may be an extensive revival of the Lord's work! The passing of the Roman Catholic Relief Bill, as it did pass, is a sad sign!"

In proportion as his home-engagements multiplied, Mr. Bickersteth found his frequent journeys an increasing burden and distraction; on June 6th, 1829, Whit-Sunday, he wrote thus in his Journal:

"The last three weeks have been spent in journeying for the Society; the distractions and temptations of these journeys are very great. I feel that I cannot continue them much longer. But Oh! the mercies of God every where, and in every way! I deserve the trouble, I deserve not the blessing. The great and serious difficulty is my congregation, and the duties to my people. How can I, while travelling over the kingdom, fulfil my duties as a minister of a particular congregation? Lord, make my path plain. Give me a single eye, let me be wise to discern, and firm to walk in the path of duty.

"But my own soul continues dark and worldly, and it is my manifold deficiencies, neglects, and corruptions, that cause all my troubles and difficulties, or at least, that give them strength to harass and burden. I have learnt more my Saviour's wisdom towards those who approved and commended Him; "he did not commit himself to them, for he knew what was in man." O how little real disinterested and cordial love is there, when it comes to personal sacrifices, and how much self-seeking, and self-wisdom, and self-exalting, even among his professing people!

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"Blessed Jesus, how wonderful thy *self-sacrifice!* though Thou wert rich, to become poor! though Thou wert exalted, to become of no reputation."

This year was a year of many trials and perplexities, and Mr. Bickersteth was indeed, at times, pressed above measure. In 1828, the expenditure of the Society was found to have exceeded its income by £6000. So alarming a state of things could not continue. In February 1829, an Investigation Committee was appointed to revise the expenditure. Its labours were continued to the latter end of July, and a very minute examination was entered into, to ascertain where it would be most possible to retrench the expences. Some changes were made in the monthly publications; and various improvements suggested for the reduction of the expences of associations, and as to the method of keeping the accounts at home and abroad. Some new regulations were at the same time framed for the Islington Seminary. At the close of a very searching enquiry, the following honourable testimony was borne to the general conduct of the Society's affairs.

"We cannot close this Report without observing, that the nature of our investigation led us in a course rather to bring into view the failings of the Society, if failings there were, than to dwell upon its great excellences. It should also be recollected, that our part has been, not so much to contemplate the general nature and objects of the Society, as to examine into the minutiæ of its proceedings, and to rectify minor defects of detail where such defects appeared. But let it not be supposed, that we are insensible to its merits; or that our affection to its cause, or our respect for its conductors has been diminished.

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We bear our fullest testimony to the cordiality and good feeling manifested by all the Secretaries throughout our prolonged enquiry, and we rise from the laborious task assigned to us, not only with unabated affection for the Society, but with an increased impression of the magnitude of its objects, and of its claim to our most efficient support."

In the year 1829, the income of the Society rose, but was still short of the expenditure, so that there might have been much cause for anxiety. Mr. Bickersteth was, however, enabled to exercise simple confidence in God. He wrote thus in June, to Mr. Lambrick, a Missionary in Ceylon. "You will have seen how mercifully our Heavenly Father provided funds for us in the last year; but yet our expenditure exceeded our income nearly £2000, so that we are still kept dependent, and faith is called for, that we may have the wants of our Missions supplied from day to day. We have not a quarter's expenditure on hand at the present moment. But we have a God of all power, and riches, and means, and we know that we are carrying on a work, specially dear to Him, and doubt not that we shall find His help in every time of need." To Mr. Timnell in the same island, he wrote. "We make it a point, to urge prayer on our friends. Hard as it is to get money, I believe it is harder still to get prayer: both however come from the same source, the grace of God. He only bestows the gift of liberality, He only pours out the spirit of grace and supplication. But we trust that He is yearly imparting both gifts more abundantly to His church."

He had not only to contend with the general difficulties of the Society; he felt much embarrassment with respect to his own position and duties. "O the pressure of daily

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work which comes upon me," he exclaimed. " I feel that I cannot continue it much longer, for every duty suffers by my being responsible for too many." He felt that his frequent absence from home, was a serious hindrance to the fulfilment of his duties to his own family ; that his congregation suffered and was scattered when he left them, and that he could not efficiently fulfil his duties at the Church Missionary House, while he was so frequently hindered from being present at the Committee-meetings. He therefore seriously doubted, whether it were not his duty to resign his Secretaryship, especially as at this time he had confidence in his fellow-labourers, and believed that his place might be supplied. On the other hand, God had much blessed him in his labours for the Society, it was a scene of great usefulness to the Church. He knew, that in every situation there is a conflict of duties, and that changes are always evil, unless God directly leads to them. The income from Wheler Chapel was also very small, and his family were partly dependant on his salary as Secretary to the Society. After weighing the matter carefully, writing down, as he was wont, the reasons on either side, he laid before Mr. Pratt, Mr. Wood-rooffe, and Mr. Coates, previously to submitting it to the Committee, a proposal for a modified arrangement, by which only six Sundays in the year should be required from him. If this was declined, he felt it would lead to his resignation. He thus expresses his feelings in a letter to his wife, written May, 1829.

I am very much disposed to retain the views which I put on paper, only taking care that we duly counted the cost, both of the temporal loss, and the sphere of usefulness, beforehand. However, I seek the Lord's guidance, and do trust in Him that the way shall

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be made perfectly plain. If the Lord continue me health and strength, I trust that he will open doors of profitable employment, so that my family shall not suffer in the result. My own conscience obliges me to some alteration from the present state.

You will keep the letters which refer to our proposed changes, as I shall probably, when things are settled, wish to see the workings of my own mind, both for humiliation and consolation. Whatever may be the result, one thing I am anxious after, that we may especially seek first the kingdom of God; and I would fain hope that it is on this ground, that I have laid the alteration which I have proposed, before Mr. Pratt, Mr. Woodrooffe, and Mr. Coates, and shall probably proceed to lay it before the Committee: otherwise *pride* would say, do not leave to them the rejection of your services, but retire at once, stating that you cannot give the time to journeying which you have previously given. I should not propose to retire in any case till Lady Day in next year. But how uncertain life till then! how may a single moment totally change the scene! the Lord enable us to watch and pray, and give to Him the present moment; and yet how important each of the various steps of life, as it affects our dear children, as it affects my ministry, my congregation, and the general cause of Christ.

In the beginning of June 1829, the following prayer was written in his Journal.

"Almighty and most merciful Father, who hast encouraged us to acknowledge Thee in all our ways, and assured us, that then Thou wilt direct our paths;—I, Thy sinful creature, redeemed by the blood of Thy Son, do now earnestly seek Thy direction. I know not the way which I ought to take. I know not what is for Thy glory, for the good of Thy church, for the good of my family, or for my own good. I feel oppressed and burdened, with the conviction, that every duty is necessarily defectively performed, by reason of the many for which I am responsible,

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more especially, I feel that much journeying is inconsistent with other duties, and with congregational and family claims. Father of mercies, make my way clear before me, that I may in all things have a conscience void of offence.

"Thou knowest every spiritual fear. Thou knowest every temporal anxiety. Thou hast the hearts of all concerned in Thy hand; to Thee I flee; on Thee I rest. Guide and direct all my thoughts and words, purposes and plans, and those of all concerned, so that all things may be ordered and settled in such a way as may be for thy glory and my best good.

"When I see, O my Father, the way by which Thou hast hitherto led me, how much reason have I to repose in Thee. Thou didst call me to the work of the ministry. Thou didst carry me to Africa and back. Thou hast blessed me in my publications. Thou hast prospered my journeyings. Thou hast given me my family and supported it from year to year; Thou hast appointed me over my congregation, and given me acceptance with them. All I have, and all I am I owe to Thee, the Father of all my mercies, and the God of all my comforts.

"But here is my burden and my fear. There is not a mercy that I have not abused; there is not a scene of duty in which I have been placed, that I have adequately filled. Thou knowest all my secret sins, and all my transgressions are open before Thee, my God; I acknowledge them in Thy sight. I bewail them now in Thy presence; I have sinned against Thee, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son.

"Yet let mercy rejoice over judgment; cast me not away from Thy service. Give me not up to those things which I have so justly merited. Look upon the face of

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Jesus Thine Anointed, and lead me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

"I have reason to fear myself, my pride, my self-will: I have reason to fear my selfishness, my love of honour, and my love of the world.

"Oh! my Father, let not the carnal mind lead me into the paths of error, but guide me by thy Spirit into the way of truth. Set a watch before my mouth. Give me, oh give me the wisdom that is profitable to direct. I do commit my way unto Thee, O Lord! I do trust in Thee. O do Thou bring to pass that which is really good, so that with a free mind and a glad heart I may run in the way of thy commandments. Hear, O most merciful Father! I entreat Thee, through Jesus Christ, my only hope, my Mediator and Advocate before Thee. Amen."

He, who often sends the choicest mercies in times of trial, cheered his servant even in the midst of the journeys which so much harassed him, by the scenes of usefulness which opened on every side. He wrote thus from Teignmouth in July.

I am sometimes fagged, but these are amazing scenes of usefulness. May our God give me grace to be faithful, watchful, and prayerful, to improve them to the uttermost. The varied questions and cases that are brought before me for an opinion, are remarkable. One has a work for the press, on which he wants advice; another has to deal with a doubtful character, of leading position, willing to favour religious Societies as a cloak to himself;—what shall they do? a third is in a large and wicked town without the gospel, and wishes to join the Dissenters; a fourth is just beginning to see the errors of a barren orthodoxy, but afraid of the evangelical party. Such cases as these are continually coming before me. Pray that I may have wisdom and fidelity for them all.

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The following letter from Hatherleigh, July 23, 1829, shows how his labours were blessed at Plymouth ; and the account of the embarkation of Bishop Heber will be read with interest.

I am now writing in the study of a most interesting and venerable man, the Rev. C. Glascott, the friend of Whitfield, Wesley, Toplady, Fletcher, and all the good men of ancient days. He is in his 87th year, full of zeal and love, because full of Christ, with all the vigour of healthy and cheerful old age, and all the maturity of wisdom which such a lengthened experience as his gives. He has been about forty-eight years vicar of this place, an almost solitary light shining in a dark country for a lengthened period. God has blessed him here with much usefulness, and he has a large fund of anecdotes of all the good men with whom he has associated.

Our stay at Plymouth was most interesting and affecting, the Bishop of Calcutta was prevented preaching, but providentially was enabled to attend our meeting; and he, and his chaplain, Mr. Carter, made impressive and profitable addresses to us, the first part of the meeting, as they had received orders to embark the same morning. I began then to speak, and in the middle of my speech, the captain of the frigate sent for them, and they left the meeting; the whole scene was most interesting and affecting. He is gone forth in the very best missionary spirit. I happened to preach on John ix. 3, 4, the very text his late wife had left on her death-bed on his mind. There was an immense congregation: the Bishop and his chaplain, Lord and Lady Northesk, Sir John and Lady Dalhousie, and several other persons of rank and character, the Mayor and corporation, &c.

Our Society was in a most delicate state at Plymouth, from differences among the clergy, and unfortunate circumstances that had arisen. I am thankful to say, that I hope our meeting has been the means, through the goodness of God, of healing all, and that I trust God used me for this end; the history would be long, but the lesson is, what a mischievous and dividing thing SELF, in all

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its workings, is, and what a beneficial and uniting point CHRIST is, for the whole Church of God.

I mention these things as very consoling in our separation; it is not for a small end that God calls us to give up each other, or me to give up my dear congregation.

I cannot tell you how much I have enjoyed dear Bridges' society. It has made this journey quite a comfort to me. His heart is so continually with his Saviour, and he is so constantly alive to spiritual things, that it has been quite a blessing to me.

An increasing blessing attended Mr. Bickersteth's ministry, and he became more and more interested in his charge at Wheler Chapel. Mr. Tillard succeeded in making the purchase for him, and the Bishop licensed him as minister of the chapel in August. At this time he wrote thus to Mrs. Bickersteth, who was staying with his children by the sea-side at Pakefield.

On Sunday, I trust, we found our God with us. The morning congregation was large and solemnly attentive: my subject in the morning, the importance of earnestness in religion, (Matt. xi. 12,) and in the afternoon, on the evidences of true religion in the heart. I heard of one, who had been present the Sunday before, and who had died in the week! How solemn our work as ministers! I feel that we must give more time to it when we return. You must try to get more among the females, and I among the men. I am persuaded very much more may be done for God and his Christ at Wheler Chapel.

I was regularly licensed by the Bishop on Friday as Minister. I am thus, for the first time, permanently fixed with the charge of a congregation. I feel the responsibility of the trust. May the Lord enable me to be faithful, and to give my whole mind and soul to ministerial and missionary work, the most blessed work on earth.

While at Pakefield, Mrs. Bickersteth was taken seriously

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ill. The following letter describes his conflict of mind on being unable to join her.

I would have come down this night, but you are aware how I am hampered by engagements, so that I cannot move as I would: to night I have a meeting; I have a weighty mass of work between this and coming to you on Monday, and on Sunday I have three sermons, for one of which I am advertised. Under these circumstances, I must not yield to my feelings, but must pour out my prayers that our God may deal mercifully and tenderly with you, give you much consolation, and if it be his will, speedily remove your complaint. Very bitter, but very salutary is this medicine; it is from a Father's hand, and we must only say, "The will of the Lord be done." But I had hoped to have seen you so strengthened. However, let us be thankful you have this illness at Pakefield with kind friends, and with the children in health around you. How much worse it might have been, and how needful these trials are, we both feel, and I hope can realize in them, not a Father's wrath, but his love,—not darkness, but light,—not a token of enmity, but a token for good. I endeavour to cast this care on Him who careth for us, and there is my present relief; but O how marvellously Christians are made, not in the smooth, quiet, pleasant, easy path which they would choose, but in contradictions and disappointments, and sorrows, and pain, and labour; not in the realizing of the fairy visions of carnal hope, but in difficulties, and temptations, and corruptions within: so God fits his vessels of mercy for himself. Oh! if chosen in Christ, well may we be content to be buffeted of Satan for a season, seeing we hope soon to be in rest and bliss for ever. What a Saviour is Jesus! how rich and full his grace! How adapted for the vilest sinners! He never casts away the returning offender. He is able to save to the uttermost. On this rock all my hopes rest, I find every other to be lighter than vanity.

I had a delightful meeting with my Sunday-school boys' teachers. The master, Pullen, is gone, and the teachers voluntarily take the

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whole care of the school in a nice spirit. I do love ministerial work far more than attempting to lead and govern in the debates and discussions of even Christian Societies; but we must take up every part of that work to which God calls us."

The winter was a deeply interesting time at Wheler Chapel; it was as if the Lord, who had tried his servant by so many years of waiting and humiliation, would now recompense him with a double blessing. The congregations were large and attentive; the Spirit was poured out on the ministry; sinners were converted, and the children of God built up in the faith. Numbers crowded to the table of the Lord, so that on one occasion there were 150 communicants, and such a spirit of liberality prevailed among the congregation, (by no means a wealthy one), that in one year £400 were raised for various charitable objects. Their affection to their pastor responded to the love he bore them. The energies of his mind were fully called out in devising plans for their profit. Not content with the existing services in the chapel, he raised funds for the establishment of two Lectures, one on Sunday and one on the week-day evening. He wrote thus in his journal respecting these Lectures:

"*November* 1*st*, 1829. Good and gracious is my heavenly Father! Surely, most richly do I partake of His loving-kindness day by day.

"There are likely to be some important improvements at Wheler Chapel. The Bishop having felt himself obliged to hinder the Missionaries from assisting in reading prayers, I was thrown into much perplexity, and almost tempted to give up the post of labour; but through the kindness of Mr. Tillard, the proprietor, who has agreed to take unlet pews to the amount of £75 for the use of

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his tenantry, I hope that this may lead to the establishment of two lectureships, and the regular assistance of a Curate, so that it may become a much-enlarged scene of usefulness to all the neighbourhood. All praise to Thee, O Thou gracious Father, from whom comes every good gift.

"This last month has been a tried, and trying, but a merciful month. My cup runs over with blessings, and among the most wonderful, is the long-suffering, the forbearance of my heavenly Father.

"*November 8th*, 1829. I hope, this day three weeks, to commence the Sunday-evening lecture. I have been greatly obliged to kind friends who have come forward with liberal contributions for the establishment of the two lectureships. I have arranged, that Mr. Woodrooffe should assist me morning and afternoon.

"I feel many fears and anxieties, which I would note, that I may see, shall I say, the Lord's hand in their removal?—yes, I will trust, and not be afraid.

"1. I fear, lest Mr. Tillard's tenants should refuse on any terms to attend the chapel.

"2. I fear, lest the evening congregation should not be such as to justify the expense and labour.

"3. I fear, lest the contributors should in a little time fall off.

"4. I fear, lest the undertaking of four weekly services should often burden me.

"5. I fear, lest little good should be done after all, and I should have to return to old inefficiency.

"Lord, I commit the whole of my plans unto Thee, who alone canst prosper them, and carry me through them, and give me a full success, far beyond my largest hopes. I do earnestly pray, that Wheler Chapel may be

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a seed of very enlarged blessing to the whole neighbourhood—that my ministry there may at length be largely owned of Thee, and many a poor sinner may be there born of God, there edified, there comforted, and there made meet for the heavenly inheritance. O Jesus, make me a faithful shepherd, to gather Thy own sheep.

"*December 6th*, 1829. Through divine mercy, I, last Sunday, opened the Wheler Chapel Sunday evening lecture. There are now four regular services there in the week. O Lord, water them with the dew of Thy blessing, for if there were four hundred, without that, no good would be done.

"This week, I trust, a District Visiting Society (on Friday the 11th) will be formed for Spitalfields. God has been very gracious in facilitating things, and removing impediments, and disposing the Rector to concur. May the same gracious Father crown the effort with a yet more abundant blessing.

"But in the midst of work, how is my soul?—Lord Jesus, I would be Thine, I would serve Thee through the work of Thy Spirit, but the flesh weighs down the spirit, and I sink. O Lord, save me, or I perish. It is a dying life I live, more like death than life. Give, O give me fuller supplies of Thy Holy Spirit. Think of the station in which Thou hast placed me, and how many of Thy people are looking to me, to know Thy will, to be guided, quickened, and comforted. O Jesus, my Saviour, richly endow me with Thy grace for the good of Thy church.

"*December 25th*, 1829. How thankful have I reason to be for the exceeding loving-kindness of my God towards me, especially in using me as his instrument of good to others. I bless His name, that the District Society has

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been established. I commit it to Him, to make it an instrument of extended good. I thank Him for the willingness and liberality of my dear people. May he perfect this effort of Christian charity, so that thousands in our afflicted district may sing praises to His name.

"And then,—O yes first of all, let me be given wholly to the Lord, and let not my corruptions triumph over me, and mar, and weaken, and destroy.

"There is not a poor person in my congregation, more weak and exposed to temptation than I see myself to be. O blessed Jesus, I feel that I must fall, if Thou hold me not up. And let not temptation waste my spiritual vigour, but let it only draw me closer to Thee, and so strengthen every grace, thereby tried and exercised.

"What a strange mixture is my soul! In one hour an angel of light, guiding and animating others to eternal glory—in another, my soul cleaving to the dust, and sinking in the miry clay of this world's corruption.

"O Jesus, never surely had poor sinner more infinite need of Thy righteousness and Thy strength; never surely had poor sinner more reason to trust only in Thee, and to glory only in Thee."

He had ever felt strongly the importance of lay-agency, and now that he saw himself surrounded by so large a number of devout communicants, he was most anxious to build them up as a living Church to the Lord, that through them he might act on the rest of the congregation. Amongst them he looked to find Sunday School teachers, and visitors for the Benevolent and District Societies. He begged for a list of their names, that he might mention them individually in prayer, and he appointed communicants' meetings, to secure more inti-

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mate intercourse with them. The first of these meetings was held October 29th, 1829. On this occasion he explained to them, that they were intended for the regular communicants, the object being, to promote a spirit of confidence in, and affection towards each other. He also expressed his desire to make them occasions of intercessory prayer, so, that if any were in trouble, they might feel that they had the benefit of the prayers of a company of devoted Christians;—on this account he wished to be informed beforehand, of any special cases to be prayed for.

The communicants assembled again in the beginning of December. With assurances of his hearty love, he told them how he rejoiced to meet with them,—how he had looked forward to it. He was then about establishing the District Visiting Society, and the subject he brought before them that night for special prayer, was, the state of the Metropolis. He reminded them of its influence, of its advantages, of its sins, sins existing just outside the very doors of their chapel. What, he asked them, are Christians? The light of the world —the salt of the earth—the great preservation of London—the true spring of the glory of England. He told them that the strength of Ministers was quite unequal to the work of Christianizing London; that their people must be their fellow-helpers, and that for this purpose, District Societies had been planned. He exhorted them earnestly to manifest their evangelical principles, by fruitful works and labours of love, and to come forward to his assistance, however weak, however feeble they were, if they could give but one hour a week, and visit but one house,—but some who had more time would he hoped take ten or twenty. He explained to them,

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how he wished for communicants as visitors, because those who would do good to others, must first feel the value of their own souls. By the end of December he had already fifteen District Visitors.

At their next meeting, December 31st, the subject was Prayer for their families,—for unconverted friends,—for Christian friends under trial. On this occasion, their pastor brought before them their domestic duties, and exhorted them, as children of God, each to shine as a light in his own family. He reminded the heads of families how important a talent their influence was with their clerks, shopmen, &c. He told parents of their responsible trust in training immortal beings, and spoke to children of their duties towards pious parents, and of the delicate, yet blessed, part any of them had to act, whose parents were not yet brought to God. He had been himself, for some years, an inmate in a London house, and could speak from experience, when he exhorted those in that position to seek the spiritual welfare of the families where they lodged. Pious servants were not forgotten in his exhortations, but were charged to pray much for the families in which they served.

In February, the Communion of Saints was the subject of the meeting, and at its close he reminded them of their duties towards each other—to watch over each other—to pray for each other—to exhort one another—to provoke one another to love—to help each other. In March, he strove to stir them up to fulfil their duties towards the unconverted part of the congregation. He reminded them how grievous it was, that among those who were fellow-worshippers in the same house of God, some should find the truth a savour of death unto death, which was a

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savour of life unto life to others. As Christians he exhorted them not to be high-minded, but to fear,—not to neglect the unconverted, but to seek their conversion. Then alluding to his own fearful responsibility as a minister, inasmuch that if a soul was neglected, its blood would be required of him, he entreated them to be his fellow-helpers, by a holy example, by pious conversation, by distributing religious books, by becoming district visitors, and above all by constant prayer. At the April meeting, he strove to raise them to a yet higher subject, and brought before them the enlargement of Christ's kingdom throughout the world.

Thus while his own time for personal intercourse with the people of the district was very limited, he strove to gather round him, and train for service, a body of faithful fellow-labourers, through whom he might reach the wretched wanderers in every street and alley round his chapel, and bring them, if possible, within the sound of the Gospel.

The decision respecting his own position in the Church Missionary Society did not take place till the spring. The report of the Investigation Committee led in November to discussions with regard to the Islington Institution, which were peculiarly distressing to him. He had a deep view of the vital importance of that Institution. On the character of the future missionaries of the Society, depended, under God, the success of the work, and that character was partly to be formed by the training received at the Institution; he saw then the paramount necessity of a highly spiritual tone pervading the whole of that establishment. Alterations which he felt it a duty to advocate, brought him into painful collision with one, for whom on many accounts he entertained a real respect.

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Many of his old and valued friends too were ranged against him in the Committee; strong feeling was excited, and he was finally outvoted. He saw his own line of duty, however, plain, and he followed it, with the usual straightforwardness and candour of his character. Before the meeting, he wrote to the party whom he was compelled to oppose, stating the course he felt bound in duty to take; but when, at the Committee, some fear was expressed, lest there might be a difficulty after such differences, in parties working pleasantly together, he instantly assured them that it would produce no difference in his future conduct, and that he should regard the decision of the Committee as an indication of the will of God.*

The following letter, written in December 1829, to Mr. Wilkinson, one of the missionaries in India, shows how he felt the struggles through which he had been passing.

"The Society has to go through many conflicts and difficulties. Satan hates it, and the world hates it, and

* Mr. Bickersteth was so beloved in the Church of God, that some might think he had been almost exempted from the trial of passing through ill report, as well as good report. This was, however, not the case; but if any feeling of enmity arose, he had drunk so largely of the spirit of the Prince of Peace, that he had learned at once to quench it with love. During these trying discussions, one of his oldest friends went so far in the heat of debate, as to speak of his confidence in the Secretaries as entirely sapped; yet a few months afterwards, receiving from this friend an assurance that he had acted without any personal feeling of unkindness, he wrote in return, "As to the meeting at the Church Missionary House, I have long ago forgiven all those who on that occasion disclaimed their confidence in me. But I stop, my dear friend; what times we live in, and what a work we are called to! Let us entirely bury every difference, in love and devotedness to our Divine Saviour. I love you most truly as an honoured servant of our great Master, whose praises we shall, I trust, together for ever celebrate above, where every name is lost but His. I repeat again, it will rejoice us to see you and any of your family here." With this friend, he continued in close and delightful intercourse to the end of his life.

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many who love Christ mistake its plans, and little aid it; and doubtless there are many infirmities in its conductors and its labourers; but the strength of Christ is still perfected in our weakness, and we are upheld by Him, and we doubt not shall be so, till he has accomplished by us his own purposes of grace and love to his chosen seed.

"The loss of valuable labourers, especially of such labourers as our beloved brother F., is a sore trial. God's judgments are a depth, but it is a depth of wisdom, love, and faithfulness, and we bow to His holy will."

His own experience during this winter may be seen by a few further extracts from his journals.

"*February 6th*, 1830. I am prevented by a cold from attending the Saturday evening meeting, and have thence a little time for retirement. The Lord bless it for my soul's good.

"My mind has been less turned by studies from active duties in my ministry and Society, and I feel most comfortable within, when thus not contemplatively in study, but actively in work, serving God.

"It has been a trying and conflicting time in the Society, especially about the Institution. I trust that the Lord has guided us to that issue which is most for His glory; but my only comfort is in casting the whole on Him.

"As to myself, I see so much evil and defect that my mouth is shut as to complaining of others;—evil and defect in every part of duty and obligation. I do desire before God now deeply to humble myself for every neglected and omitted duty, and for every misapplied labour.

"It is not sufficient to the Christian that he is active

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in good works unless they be appointed good works,—the good works 'which God has before ordained (προητοιμασεν) that we should walk in them.' May I ever bear this in mind, and not be carried away by inclination or sympathy, or appearance of good, or reality of good, from immediate, appointed, and stated duties. I feel that here I have often greatly erred. In such a metropolis as this,—in such a public station as mine, without firmness, I shall easily be led astray by excellent things, from prior excellent things which are positive duties. Lord, give me grace to discern things that differ, and to follow the more excellent way. I feel that there is far too much of man's work, and too little of God's work, in my own experience, in my ministry, and in all my labours. The Saviour, with all His blessings, is not duly prominent, but self in its varied forms thrusts out privileges and principles. O for more of the Spirit of Christ, without which there cannot be the grace of Christ. Intercessory prayer for my congregation is not kept up with regularity and constancy. Lord, lead me to pray more for all, specially the communicants.

"*February* 28, 1830. The labours which I have to pass through are many—three fresh sermons each week —my secretaryship duties—and the societies connected with the chapel; and my heart is not, as it ought to be, led hereby to a continual waiting upon God, but is burdened and distracted. Yet, looking at the trials of others, I feel that my mercies are great, my trials few. Difficulties I have, and must have in every occupation and circumstance of life; nor can I fly from them,—the only thing is to cast them all on the Lord,—to choose Him for my God, and never to doubt His love and His grace.

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"*May* 7, 1830. I feel full of uncertainty as to every thing before me. All is shaking and agitating. Nothing is settled about my private arrangements with the Society, and the fixing of them may materially change the whole course of my duties. The will of the Lord be done. O how are we called every moment to actings of faith! Faith for pardon, faith for strength, faith for direction, ourselves, and the direction of others."

On the 12th of March the meeting was held, at which the duties of the Secretaryship were considered. Mr. Bickersteth proposed to be absent on journeys for the Society, six Sundays in the year, and to give five hours daily to its general work, and he offered to become responsible for the Report. He considered that there was sufficient work for him at the Church Missionary House, and that, after fourteen years of such incessant travelling, he might, in justice to himself, and without injury to the Society, have some partial relief. If, however, the Committee thought that better arrangements might be made for conducting the Society's work, he begged that no personal feeling of kindness to himself might influence them, as he was prepared to consider their decision as the voice of God, calling him to another sphere of labour. It appeared the unanimous opinion of all present, that he could not be allowed to give up a portion of the travelling, without serious injury to the Society. On the 13th of March, he wrote the following letter, but did not immediately send it.

MY DEAR SIR,

I regret to have to communicate to the Committee my determination, after much painful inward conflict, to resign my situation as Secretary, in a Society which has ever been, and I trust ever will be, very dear to me. . . . Deeply sensible of many imperfec-

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tions in fulfilling the duties of the post, which I have so long occupied, I would earnestly pray, that a larger portion of the Divine Spirit may rest on my successors, and on all the plans of a Society which God has largely used for the advancement of His kingdom in the world.

I cannot also but notice the many mercies which I have received in this situation; and though it has been to me one of peculiar toil, and of many trials, yet I shall ever have reason to bless God that I have been permitted, for so lengthened a period, to labour in a service so directly connected with the most important of all objects that can occupy the human mind. . . .

On Sunday, March 14th, he wrote in his Journal. "The last has been a most painful week of discussion, temptation, and conflict, and yet a week with many mercies. There seem real difficulties, either in retaining my situation as Secretary, or in retiring, both as it regards the Church Missionary Society, and myself. The will of the Lord be done! The probability is that I shall stay a little longer. I have been anxious to explain my situation fully to those who ought to decide, that I may see the leadings of my God. O Father! make my path clear, and may I ever live to Thee."

This Sunday, Abel Smith Esq., the patron of the living of Watton, Herts, was one of his hearers at Wheler Chapel. He had attended his ministry with profit and delight, during the few weeks he spent in 1826 at Stapleford; and Dr. Dealtry, the incumbent of Watton, having informed him of his wish to resign, he desired, before making an offer of the living to Mr. Bickersteth, to hear him preach again among his own people.

On March 19th Mr. Bickersteth's Journal contains the following entry. "I am brought, encompassed with many

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mercies, to the day of my birth, and though clouds are round about me, yet mercies also abound on every side. I know not the way before me, but my Father does, and I hope to keep close to Him, and then I need fear no evil. Never did I seem more encompassed with straits and doubts, but all shall clear up."

The next Sunday, Mr. Smith was again at the Chapel, and coming into the vestry after the service, offered to him the living of Watton. His path seemed to be so plainly marked by God, that, after a few days' consideration, he felt it his duty to accept it.

"Very wonderful," he wrote on March 28th, "have been the Lord's dealings with me in the last few months. Gradually one thing after another came to shake me out of my present post. I should never have left it for the mere troubles and conflicts, and difficulties of my situation, though these were of no ordinary character; but I had gradually become pledged to conflicting duties—travelling, with home business and the ministry, so that none could be conscientiously fulfilled, and when I asked for relief from the travelling, it was denied me. The hand of my God was in it for good, and He shall have the praise. I felt it to be my duty to resign, and wrote the resignation; and just at this crisis, my kind and Christian friend, Mr. Smith, offered me the living of Watton.

"Had it come at another time, I could not have accepted it, without the suspicion of filthy lucre inducing me to leave the Society; but coming at such a time, I see the special providence of a gracious Father, watching over my family for good, and calling me to a new scene of duty.

"*April 4th*, 1830. If it be the Lord's will, I am to go to Watton in the month of August. A gracious time is

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before me, for fulfilling duties here before my retirement, and preparing for new duties hereafter, and exercising faith, prayer, and thankfulness."

On April the 5th he wrote to his patron. "I had a painfully interesting day yesterday. My dear flock had heard of the prospect of my removal, and I felt it right, in the evening, to mention the subject, to lead them to special prayer that the remaining time together might be improved, and that I might have their prayers as to the removal."

The announcement excited deep and general regret, for the ties of love which bound the Wheler congregation to their pastor were very strong. Much as he delighted in their love, he would not have them rest in him, but strove to lead their minds to that heavenly Shepherd, from whom they could never be parted. 'Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils,' was the subject on which he preached at this time. He entreated them also to keep together, and not to be shaken by changes in the ministry, but to assist his successor, as they had assisted him. As to the character of that successor, he had happily no anxiety; the only desire of his friend, Mr. Tillard, being to appoint one who should carry on all his plans for the good of his people. His resignation was now sent in to the Church Missionary House, and he had a comfortable confidence that his place there would be well supplied. The pillar of fire and cloud was before him, and he could not doubt that the Lord himself was calling him to a new stage in his earthly pilgrimage.

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